WORK AND WIN

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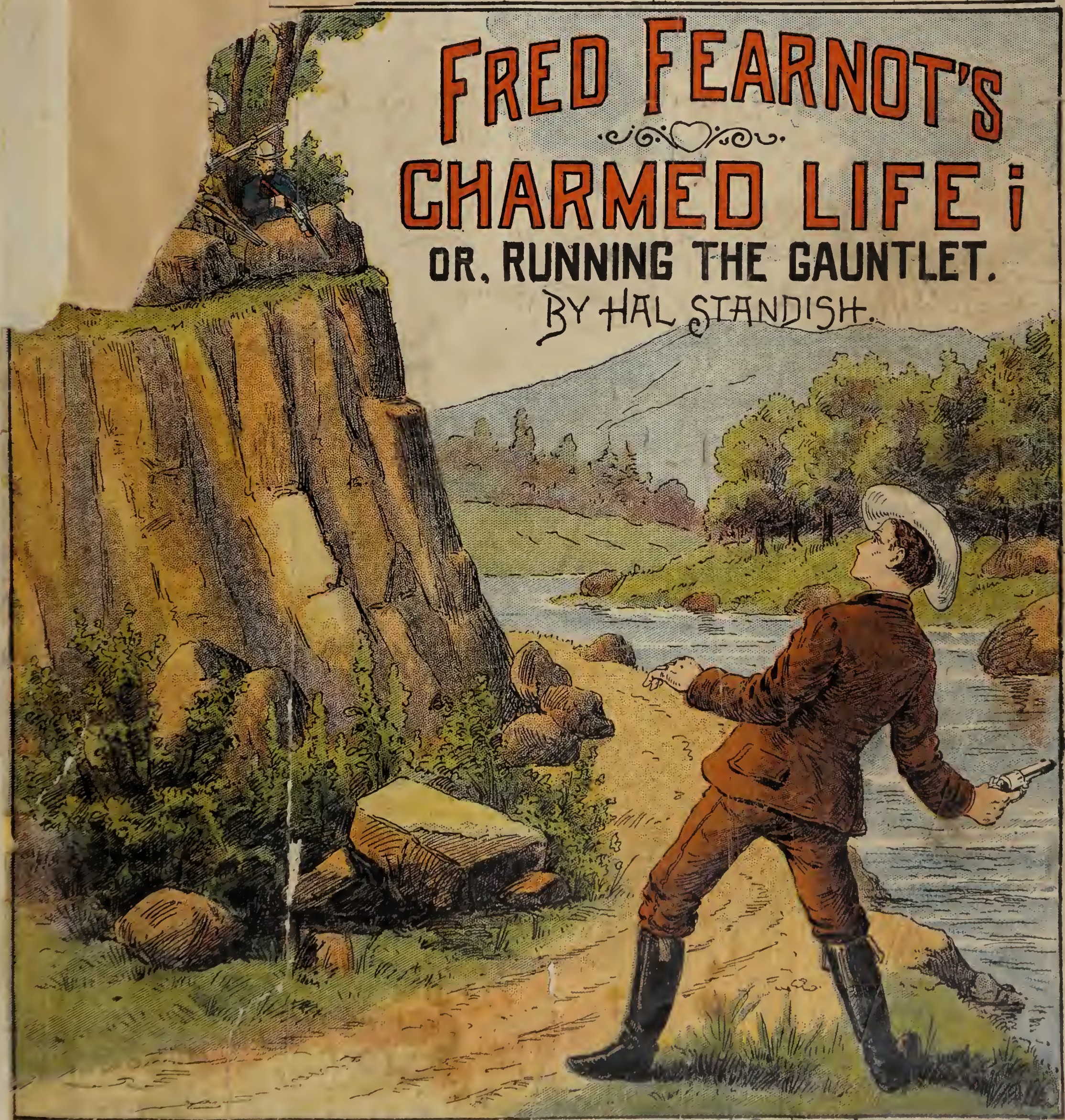
153

FRED FEARNOT'S CHARMED LIFE;

OR, RUNNING THE GAUNTLET.

BY HAL STANDISH.



Suddenly Fred heard a voice call to him from the top of the bluff: "Drop that gun, and hold up your hands!" He looked around and saw a half dozen men peering at him from behind trees.

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A COMPLETE SET IS A REC

EDWARD DR

SPORTING.

FORTUNE TELLING

ATHLETIC

WORK AND WIN.

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FRED FEARNOT'S CHARMED LIFE;

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CHAPTER I.

THE TROUBLE IN THE SMOKER.

When Fred Fearnot, Joe Jencks and Jack Lewis left Tucson in Arizona, going westward, they found themselves on the Southern Pacific Express. It was a splendid train, about half the coaches being sleepers and parlor cars.

The others were day coaches, a smoker, mail car, baggage and express.

Jack went to the smoker at once to enjoy his pipe, but Fred and Joe took seats in one of the parlor cars.

Each had his rifle with him, which they thrust under their revolving chairs.

There were quite a number of ladies and gentlemen in the car.

They had doffed their red flannel shirts and put on coats and vests.

"Going out hunting?" an old gentleman, sitting behind Fred, asked him.

"No; we've already been hunting," was the reply.

"What success did you have?"

"Very good. We got some deer and bear, and quite a quantity of small game."

"Where did you find them?"

"Up in the mountains above Tucson. It would be a splendid hunting ground were it not for the gold-seekers. They are everywhere, and shoot at anything they see. If they don't find any game, they shoot at each other."

"Yes, that's the trouble with all miners. They've either got to shoot or be shot at."

"Well, the reason of that is the revolver is the only law

they have. Wherever gold is found, miners rush to the spot, and sometimes two or three thousand of them get together, without any local government whatever. The only law that a man can appeal to under such circumstances is his revolver."

"Where are you from?" he finally asked.

"I live in New York State," Fred said.

"Indeed! You are a long way from home."

"Yes. A good deal more than two thousand miles."

"Well, did you come all the way down to Arizona to hunt?"

"No; not for that purpose. We had business in Colorado, and we decided to return home by way of San Francisco, but we stopped at Tucson and went up into the mountains to hunt."

"What do you think of this part of the country?"

"Pretty tough." Fred replied. "A man can get shot down, in this section of country, on very slight provocation."

"Well, don't you find it easy enough to get along without provoking anybody?"

"Yes; but a man must act the coward to do so."

"Why, how's that? I live at El Paso, have been there for twenty years, and I've never had any trouble with anybody."

"El Paso is a city with a good municipal government, with ample police protection; but out in the smaller places, and in the mining camps, a man can only keep out of trouble by not resenting insults and impositions."

"I don't agree with you, my young friend."

"Perhaps you haven't been out in the mines."

"I was up at some of the silver mines on two occasions."

"Well, suppose a big, drunken bully should come in here, with a belt around his waist, and a revolver hanging to it, and order you to get up and give him your seat, what would you do?"

"I'd call the conductor and have him put out. What would you do?"

"The probabilities are there'd be a fight, for I should certainly refuse to give up my seat, and because I'm rather boyish-looking, he'd take me by the collar, maybe, to lift me out of my seat. Then I'd draw my little gun and pump lead into him."

"Has there anything of that kind ever happened to you?"

"Yes; on three occasions?"

"Did you shoot them?"

"Only once; didn't kill him. The other two I was able to manage without using a revolver. There's a lot of bullies, you know, all through this section of country, who fill up on vile whiskey, proclaim themselves screaming catamounts, or something-worse, and try to frighten people, and a lot of them get frightened, too. If a wild bull or steer gets after me I'll take to my heels, if I can't find a tree to climb, but I don't give way an inch for a drunken bully."

"Well, isn't it just as sensible to avoid a drunken bully as it is to get out of the way of a mad steer?"

"Yes; when a man can do so without showing the white feather. No man has the right to interfere with another. This is a free country. And one man is just as good as another, if he knows how to behave himself."

"That's all very true; but a man can avoid trouble by having nothing to do with these bullies."

"Oh, yes! He can take to his heels and run away, or he can conceal himself. I have a young friend in New York State who was out West with me, once, at Cheyenne. He was walking down the street when he heard pistol shots, and people ran into the stores on each side and shut the doors. Down in the next block was a big, drunken bully, roaring and bellowing, coming up the street, shooting at everything in sight. Instead of running in, he drew his revolver and waited for him to get in range. Then he took aim at him and broke his right arm. It brought the bully to a roundup, and took all the fight out of him completely. There wasn't a man in town who didn't say he served him right."

"Yes; no doubt it did; and the probabilities are it saved some one else from being hurt."

"Yes; every man has to take his chances, but my friend was a dead shot. It would have been as easy a matter to have hit him in the head as on the arm. When the crowd gathered around the bully, he looked at the young man who shot him, and asked:

"What did you shoot at me for?"

And he replied:

"Because I didn't want you to have all the fun; I wanted a little myself."

One of the bully's friends took it up and asked him if he wanted to have any more fun.

"No; I've just had it," was his reply.

"Well, have some more," said the bully, reaching for his gun.

My friend was quick. He knocked the bully down by smashing him in the face, disarmed him, and then proceeded to clean the street with him. The street was in a very dusty condition, and he sought the dusty spots in which to roll him. Then he thumped him a few times and stood him on his head, and filled his mouth full of dust. The bully finally said he had enough, and my friend let him up and gave him his revolver, but the fellow's eyes were so blinded with the dust of the street that he couldn't see a house; hence he didn't shoot."

"Well, your friend was a bully, too, wasn't he?" the old gentleman asked.

"No; he is a very quiet young man, about my age and size. He is a graduate of a famous academy in New York State, where he was a member of several athletic clubs, and hardly anybody but a John L. Sullivan could get the best of him. There's nothing on earth he dislikes more than a drunken, swaggering bully, and I quite agree with him that they are indeed disgusting."

Just then the train reached a water station, and stopped to fill up the tank. A couple of passengers came in from the smoker, two cars in front, looking for seats, but there wasn't a vacant one in that coach.

Joe overheard one of them say that he'd rather stand up

than go back to the smoker, for fear that somebody would be killed.

"What's the trouble in there?" Joe asked.

"One man is holding up another one with his revolver. He got the drop on him, and is giving him the worst abuse I ever heard one man give another. The victim says he is a Colorado man, belonging on a ranch."

"Say, Fred, that may be Jack," said Joe. "Let's go in and see about it," and they both left their seats, went through the other two cars in front, and entered the smoker.

Joe was ahead, and Fred close behind him.

As soon as they entered the car, both took in the situation. A big, red-shirted bully was holding a revolver within a foot of Jack's head, while others were looking on, listening to a torrent of vile profanity.

Quick as a flash, Joe whipped out his revolver, covered him with it, and ordered him to:

"Drop that gun."

The fellow looked around, and found himself looking down into the muzzle of another revolver.

"All right, pard," was the bully's cool reply. "I ain't doin' nothin'," and he dropped the revolver on the floor where he was standing in the aisle.

Quick as a flash Jack reached for his gun, sprang to his feet, and pressed the muzzle of it to the breast of the bully, saying:

"Let him alone, Joe. Let me attend to him."

"All right," said Joe, and he put up his gun.

Then Jack began getting even with him.

He was chewing tobacco, and spat several times in his face.

Then he ordered him off the train.

The bully deliberately walked out of the car and on to the ground.

There Jack held him up, and threatened to shoot him if he tried to get on again

When the fellow was left behind, Fred turned to Jack and asked:

"What started the trouble?"

"I refused to drink with him. He had a bottle of stuff that would have killed a coyote. We had some words about it, and he drew his gun and got the drop on me."

"Say, Jack," Joe asked, "don't you know enough not to let a man get the drop on you?"

"Yes; but all the same, he got it. I didn't expect him to do so."

There were three or four friends of the bully left in the smoker, and they began talking loudly about Jack making him leave the train.

"That's all right," said Jack. "He left his gun here. I'll turn it over to the conductor."

"I'll take it," said one of the others, "for he is a pard of mine."

"All right. He may be a pard of yours, but I don't know it. I'll turn it over to the conductor for safe keeping."

Just then the conductor entered the car, having heard of the disturbance. Jack passed the revolver to him, telling him how he came in possession of it.

"I don't want it," said the conductor.

"Well, then, leave it with the station agent at the next place," Jack advised.

"Now, Jack, you'd better come out of this, or you'll have more trouble," said Fred.

"Any empty seats in your car?" Jack asked him.

"No. Every seat is taken."

"Then I'll stay right here."

Fred was sitting alongside of Jack, while Joe took a seat in front of him.

One of the bullies came up to Joe, and asked:

"What did you take a hand in that for?"

"Because this man is a friend of mine," replied Joe.

"Well, I'm a friend of the other man."

"You ought to be ashamed to say so," returned Joe. "A man who wants to shoot another one for not drinking vile whiskey with him ought to die before he grows a beard."

The fellow reached for his gun, but Joe was ready for him. He got the drop on him.

"Now, you go back to your seat at the other end of the car," Joe ordered, "or I'll blow a hole through you and kill the man behind you."

Those bullies knew when a man had the drop on them. Without uttering another word, the fellow turned and went back to his seat at the other end of the car.

There he looked back to see if Joe was still covering him with his gun.

The other two were covering him, too.

Joe was aiming directly at the fellow's head. Fred and Jack were smiling.

"Say, pard," called one of the others, "drop it."

"Is that an order or a request?" Joe asked.

"It is a very polite request, pard."

"All right, then," and Joe put his hand back, as though inserting his revolver in its case.

The next instant the other fellow sprang to his feet and covered him with a revolver, being nearly two-thirds the length of the car distant from him.

Then he yelled out:

"Hands up!"

Joe held up both hands, but his gun was in his right, and, quick as a flash, crack it went, and the bully had a bullet in his shoulder.

The fellow dropped into his seat, put his left hand to his shoulder, and remarked to his companions:

"Pards, I'm hit."

Several other passengers left the car, for fear the bullets would begin flying back and forth.

The conductor came through the car again, and asked who was doing the shooting in there.

Joe was pointed out to him.

"What's the trouble?" he asked.

"I was held up by that cowardly bully, who ordered me to hold up my hands, covering me with his gun at the same time. I got in the first shot, though, and I guess he has the bullet in his shoulder."

"All right. If he ordered you to hold up your hands,

you were justified in shooting; but why don't you go back to your coach, where you have a seat paid for?"

"I guess I will if I can get a seat for that friend of mine."

"All right. I'll get him a seat if I have to bring in an extra one."

Fred, Joe and Jack arose and left the car, going back to the parlor-car.

There Jack stood by them until the conductor, looking over his tickets, found a seat that would be vacated at the next town.

He told Jack that if he would wait there he would get a seat in a half-hour.

"But you'll have to pay extra for it," he added.

"That's all right. How much?"

"Oh, I don't collect the fares for this car. The car conductor will look out for that," and he passed on through to the other coaches.

"What's the trouble?" the old gentleman behind Fred asked, and Fred laughingly told him what had happened.

"There, you see I was right," said the old gentleman. "You and your friend went hunting for trouble, and found it."

"Oh, I didn't have any trouble," said Fred.

"No; but you placed yourself in the way of it."

"Yes; but that friend of mine standing up there had another standing over him, holding his revolver within a foot of his head, and abusing him most outrageously. He belongs to our party, but went into the smoker to indulge in his pipe for a while."

"How did the trouble start?"

"The bully pulled out a bottle of vile whiskey and wanted him to drink with him, and he refused. There are a lot of fools in this part of the world who consider themselves insulted when another refuses to drink with them."

CHAPTER II.

A BLOODY HOLD-UP.

Jack remained in the parlor car with Fred and Joe. At the next station a seat was vacated, which he paid for and took possession of. Still, none of them were dressed like the rest of the passengers in that coach, for they wore slouch hats and the typical style of the West when out on such excursions as they were.

They talked quite freely with the old gentleman seated behind Fred, and answered a great many of his questions.

They had traveled many hours, and were nearing a little town, Maricopa, when the train slowed up, and finally came to a stop in a wild, desolate place.

Passengers looked out of the car windows on the right and left, and soon it became known that a freight train just ahead of them had been derailed.

There was but one track; hence, there was no chance for the passenger train to go on until the freight train could do likewise.

The four bullies in the smoker left the car as soon as it came to a stop.

A great many passengers got off, too, out of curiosity, to see the extent of the wreck.

Among them were Fred, Joe, and Jack.

They started up towards the wreck, when nearly a score of men came out of the woods, each with a revolver in his hand, yelling:

"Hands up! Hands up!"

Of course, a panic ensued among the passengers, nearly every one of whom fled back to the train.

Fred looked at the engine, and saw that the engineer was being held up by a masked man in the cab with him.

"It's a regular hold-up, boys," he said to Joe and Jack. "That freight train was derailed by them for the purpose of stopping ours. Come back to the car, quick," and he made a break for the parlor car.

The two followed him, and several shots were fired at them. One went through the rim of Fred's hat, but being eager to get at his Winchester, he pushed on without looking back, and entered the car.

"What's that shooting for?" the old man asked him, as he saw him hurriedly taking his Winchester out of its case.

"Train robbers," Fred answered.

"Why, bless my soul, that can't be!"

"Well, you'll find out in a minute or so."

Other passengers, rushing in, created a panic, but, of course, no one thought of leaving the car.

They began trying to hide their valuables.

"Every man who has a gun, let him use it," called out Fred.

"Oh, we'll all be killed!" screamed one of the women.

"Well, they'll have to kill me before they get my wad," sung out Joe.

"Me too," put in Jack.

Just then a masked man appeared at the door of the coach, with a revolver in his hand, and sung out:

"Hands up!"

"There's my hand," said Jack, blazing away at him with his revolver.

The robber staggered backwards and fell between the cars, but another one succeeded him almost immediately, only to get a bullet from Joe's revolver.

That set all the women in the cars to screaming, while every man but Joe, Fred and Jack was holding up his hands.

A masked man appeared at the other door, about two-thirds of a car-length from where Fred was sitting. The latter turned, fired quickly, and the robber staggered out with a bullet in his right shoulder.

All the passengers pulled down their hands and tried to get under the seats to escape the flying bullets.

Another man appeared at the door and a shot from Fearnot knocked him out.

Others robbers went to their friends to help them out, and began firing through the windows on either side of the car.

Then Fred, Joe and Jack fired through the windows also, and not one of them wasted a bullet.

Three or four of the bullies were almost instantly killed by the fire through the windows, which was so rapid as to deceive them as regarded the number inside the car.

Their leader became impressed with the idea that a military company was on board, and he signalled to his men to rally to him.

They tried to do so, but several dropped, and the others sought shelter in the bushes about fifty yards from the train.

"Now, let them have the Winchester, boys," said Fred, thrusting his revolver back in its place, and seizing his rifle.

Jack and Joe followed him quickly, and they began pouring lead into the bushes as rapidly as a pack of fire-crackers rough explode.

So far as they could ascertain, nobody else was firing from the train, but Fearnot's blood being up to white heat, he sprang from the train and continued firing his rifle into the thicket where the villains had sought refuge.

Joe and Jack did likewise, until each had emptied his weapon.

"Reload quick, boys!" Fred called, and they probably never filled the chambers of revolvers and rifles as fast as they did then.

"Now, come on! Don't let one of the rascals escape!' and he started toward the bushes.

"Oh, thunder! Fred! Come back!" called Joe.

"Yes. Come back! Come back!" yelled the conductor.

"Come on!" said Fred. "We've got them on the run," and he dashed into the bushes, where he found one of the men, lying wounded on the ground.

He fired at Fearnot, the bullet grazing his side, tearing two holes in his flannel shirt.

Instead of shooting him, Fred whacked him over the head with his rifle barrel, and he settled down as though dead.

He picked up his revolver, and found that the last shot had been fired at him.

Jack and Joe were quickly at his side, and soon found two others wounded, and the desperate villains opened fire on them.

Both of them returned the fire without a moment's hesitation, and the desperadoes were quickly knocked out.

They looked for the others, but they were out of sight, evidently having scattered in the depth of the forest.

They went forward about a hundred yards, but saw nothing of them.

"Now come back to the train," said Joe. "We are only making ourselves targets for them to fire at us from under cover."

"All right," and they turned and made their way back to the train.

On going to the car, they found that the conductor and brakeman had disarmed the wounded men lying near the train.

Three were wounded and four dead, beside the three lying in the bushes.

"Great rattlers!" exclaimed Jack, as he looked at one of the wounded men, from whose face the mask had been torn, "that's one of the chaps whom we met in the smoker, Fred."

"Yes, and there lies another one under the car. The first one you knocked out."

Jack looked at the dead man and nodded his head, with the remark:

"Yes; he must have been very anxious to get at me the first one. I don't think he had time to wink after I shot him."

The robbers being beaten off, the passengers poured out of the cars, surrounded Fred, Joe and Jack, shook hands with them, and showered extravagant praises upon them for their gallant conduct.

"Say," said Joe to one of the men, "haven't you got a gun?"

"Yes; but it was in my valise."

"That's no place to carry a gun when traveling in this part of the world."

"That's so; but I wasn't dreaming of a hold-up."

"Neither was I," said Joe, "but I had mine where it was handy, and it was a mighty good thing for me that I did."

None of the ladies left the cars, but they leaned out the windows, asking the crowd to stand out of the way so they could see the young men who had saved the train.

There was too much excitement, though, for the passengers to pay any heed to their request.

Just then the conductor came along, and reported that the engineer had been shot through the head and killed, and that the fireman was not competent to run the train.

"Well, the engineer couldn't run it, either," said a passenger, "unless he went back down the road, for that wrecked freight is in the way."

"Yes; but he could have run back to the next town, where the passengers could get something to eat, for we may be late in the night getting the track cleared.

"I can run the engine," said Fred.

"Are you an engineer?" the conductor asked.

"No; I'm an amateur, and have several times run fast trains."

"Well, it's a great risk, but if you think you can run it, I'll be glad if you'll do so."

"I can run it," said Fred. "Just move those two dead bodies out from under the car, put a man at the rear of the train to flag any other that may be coming to meet us, and we'll push back to the last station we passed, without any trouble."

The conductor consulted with the engineer and conductor of the freight train, and they gave it as their opinion that a good deal more help would be required to get the engine back on the track again.

"All right," said the conductor. "I'll go back to the next station and telegraph to Maricopa for help to come down at once."

"How are you going to do that with the engineer dead?"

"There is a passenger on board who says he can run it."

"That's all right then," and the conductor sang out: "All aboard!" three or four times.

The two dead bodies were drawn out from under the cars,

and laid alongside of the other two, the conductor of the freight train promising to take care of them.

"Well, don't let those wounded fellows get away," said Fred. "You'll find three more back there in the bushes, probably all dead."

"I know that two of them are," said Jack, "for I finished one and Joe the other."

"Well, my man was already down, and I merely tapped him on the head with my gun barrel."

Fred, followed by Joe and Jack, climbed up into the cab of the engine with their rifles.

"Say, fireman," said Fred, "have you got on plenty of steam?"

"Yes; about the usual amount."

"Well, we are going to back to the next station and telegraph for help."

"Are you an engineer?" the fireman asked.

"Not a professional one, but I can run it," and with that he blew the whistle.

The fireman had taken up his engineer and carried him to the baggage-car, so that the body was out of the way.

Fred laid his hand on the throttle, pulled it steadily, and the long train began to move backward.

In another minute the train was going very fast. From one end of it to the other the passengers were talking about the deadly work of the three young men who had beaten off the robbers.

It was a little over an hour's run back to the station, where the train was sidetracked, and the conductor telegraphed to Maricopa, Tucson, Benson, and other places along the road for a wrecking train to go to the assistance of the derailed freight train.

The news was promptly telegraphed all over the country. Inside of an hour, dispatches came from the head officials of the road.

The superintendent wanted to know the names of the young men who had protected the passengers from robbery, and the conductor went to Joe to get their names.

Joe told him, and they were flashed over the wires without a moment's loss of time.

Another hour passed, and a dispatch came to the conductor:

"Say to those three young men that they have life tickets over the entire system of the road, which will be mailed to their addresses as soon as we receive them."

"That's all right," said Fred. "We never traveled over this road before, and I don't know that we ever will again, but we are not in the habit of holding up our hands at the command of masked robbers."

All the passengers, when they found their train sidetracked at the little town, left it to go to the hotel, some three hundred yards away.

There they insisted on Fred, Joe and Jack permitting them to shake hands with them.

"All right," said Joe. "Come ahead, boys. They want to make heroes of us, and we can't refuse them the pleasure. I'm just as glad as they are that nobody was hurt, nor anything lost."

Among the ladies present was one who was traveling with her mother.

When she saw Fearnot, she looked keenly at him for nearly a minute, and then asked:

"Have you ever been in New Orleans?"

"Yes; I spent several weeks there."

"Didn't you have something to do with the theatre on St. Charles street?"

"Not officially, but with some friends there, and the manager."

"That's where I saw you. Isn't your name Fearnot?"

He acknowledged that it was.

"Well, I saw you twice. I was with my brother each time, and I little dreamed that I would see you again under such circumstances."

Then she gave him her name, and introduced him to her mother.

It turned out that Fred was acquainted with her brother, who was a member of a very fast set of young men in the Crescent City.

Then she asked after Mr. Olcott and Mr. Duncan. She remembered Miss Silvers and Miss Warner.

He told her that Elsie was married, and that Miss Silvers was now a leading lady in a New York theatre.

She had many other questions to ask, during which he informed her that he and his two friends had been down in Colorado, and were going back east by way of San Francisco.

"Why, we are going to San Francisco, too. I'm so glad you are on the train, for I'm sure we will never be robbed so long as you are on board."

"Not if I can help it you won't," he replied, "because I have a little money of my own to defend."

Dispatches kept passing between the conductor and the authorities of the road.

Finally instructions came for the conductor to run the engine and a single car up to the wreck to see how matters were getting on, and then return to wire the facts.

The conductor went to the hotel, showed Fred the dispatch, and asked him if he would run the engine up for him.

"Yes," he replied, and Joe and Jack went along with him, each with his rifle, to be prepared for anything that might turn up.

Nobody anticipated that the robbers would make another attempt to hold up the train, after having met with such a hot reception. Nevertheless, the three boys preferred to keep together, for they knew that there were many lawless characters in that part of the West, and that they were all friends of each other.

They made a pretty fast run up to the wreck, and found that a wrecking train had just come through from Maricopa. The men were hard at work, trying to place the big engine back on the track again.

The dead and wounded men were lying where they had been left, but a physician had come out on the wrecking-car to look after them.

The bodies were placed on a car, to be taken to Maricopa for burial, as well as for identification.

The wounded men would answer no questions. One of them remarked:

"We played a desperate game and lost. That's all."

After waiting about an hour at the wreck, it was estimated that it would take about five hours longer to get the engine back on the rails.

The conductor of the passenger train had an understanding with the freight conductor that he was to telegraph to him when he reached Maricopa.

Then they returned to the passenger train, reaching there just in time to join them at supper in the little old hotel.

It was a small town, but there were a large number of rough characters living both in and about the place, who assembled in the bar-room of the hotel to discuss the exciting news.

Some of them, of course, drank too much, became boisterous, and began shooting their revolvers, one of the many foolish customs in the West.

The ladies in the hotel became very much frightened, and several of the men appealed to the landlord to put a stop to it.

This was something entirely beyond his power, even had he any desire to do so. It was not often he had such a chance at a harvest, both in his dining-room and bar.

"I can't help a man being drunk after he drinks liquor," he replied to some of the passengers, "and, besides, they are not shooting at anybody any way," and so the shooting went on, but fortunately no one was hurt.

About ten o'clock in the evening a dispatch came from Maricopa that the road was clear.

The anouncement was made to the passengers at the hotel, and they all hurried to the train, where again Fred, Joe and Jack entered the cab of the engine and pulled out for Maricopa.

CHAPTER III.

LOOKING FOR THE TRAIN ROBBERS.

When the train reached Maricopa, an engineer was there, waiting to take charge in place of the one who had been killed. He was one of the regulars of the railway company.

"By George, I'm glad to see you," said Fred, "as I'm not at all familiar with the road, not having been over it before."

"Well, it seems that you have done well so far," replied the engineer, "and I tell you the company owe you a big debt of gratitude, and the managers of the line are not the men to forget it."

"Oh, we don't want anything from them, and don't expect it. We were passengers more than two thousand miles away from home, with a little money in our pockets, which we wanted to hold on to."

"That's right. If the passengers on every train that is held up would do as you did, train robbing would be very unprofitable. I can't understand how it is that so many shots were fired and no passengers hurt."

"Oh, we are the only passengers they shot at, and we kept them too busy to take aim," and with that he, Joe and Jack leaped down from the engine, ran back to their car, and were about to board it, when the conductor caught Fred by the arm, saying:

"I have a dispatch from the division superintendent, telling us to wait here till the east-bound train passes. He is on board himself, and wants to see you three young men."

"Well, as we have got to wait here till he arrives, there is nothing to prevent him from seeing us. But how long have we got to wait?"

"About thirty minutes, I guess."

"All right, then," and the conductor informed the passengers of the delay.

During the time they had to wait, the passengers discussed the adventure.

Several of them got around Jack Lewis, and drew from him as much as he knew about Fred Fearnot and his partners, and of course he made a very interesting story of it.

There were several Northern men on the train, who then remembered the famous young athlete, having seen his name so often in the sporting news for three or four years past.

"Say, Fearnot," one of them asked Fred, "I've just been able to place you. I'm a commercial traveler for a big house in Philadelphia. You are a member of the New York State Legislature, I believe."

"Yes," he laughed.

"Well, what in thunder are you doing away down here in this part of the world?"

"Merely seeing the country. I've been out to my ranch in Colorado, and made up my mind to return east by way of San Francisco. We stopped at Tucson, and went up into the mining regions in quest of game. That is how we happened to have Winchesters with us."

"Well, let me tell you that you and your partners have made a sensation greater than any of your victories in the field of sport."

"I don't claim credit for anything except for holding on to my pocket-book. That's something that a man will fight for, you know."

"Not every one," said the drummer, "for I was about as lively as any one on board trying to hide my wad."

"Where did you hide it?" Joe asked.

"Threw it down on the floor under my feet."

"A very poor way to hide it," remarked Fred, "for they would not only have searched your person, but would have looked under the seat, too."

"Probably, but it was the only thing I could do. I know two men who threw their wads and watches out of the window on the opposite side, and as soon as the robbers were beaten off they went out and picked them up again."

"Yes; and every one of them had a gun, too, hadn't they?"

"They say they hadn't. I never carried one in my life, but I shall be sure to do so hereafter when traveling down this way."

"Well, it won't do you any good unless you have the nerve to use it."

"I don't know whether I have the nerve or not. I never shot at a man in my life, and the idea of doing so fairly makes me shudder when I think of it."

"Well, I don't like to do it myself, but if a man holds me up and demands my purse I'll hand him out a few pellets of lead, if I have them on hand."

"That's the way to do; but isn't it singular what horror a masked man, with a gun in his hand, can give to a whole carload of people?"

"Yes, it is. I've often discussed it. I've read of just two men holding up a train, with a hundred and fifty men on board, and they went through and gathered a peck of watches and pocketbooks. It isn't the first time that I've been held up on a train. My partner, Terry Olcott, and I were held up in Kansas once. The robbers went through the car ahead of us, but when they entered ours we had our guns ready for them. You see, they can't strip but one man at a time. There were about thirty passengers in that coach, and we knew they could cover but one man at a time, so we blazed away, wounded and captured them. They are now serving the State of Kansas, being sent up for fifteen years each."

The east-bound train came thundering into the station, and the division superintendent at once hunted up the conductor of the train that had been held up, and said:

"I want to see those three young men before you move out."

"All right. Come with me, then," and he led the way to a little group of passengers, where Fred, Joe and Jack were talking with them.

"Mr. Fearnot," said the conductor, "this is the division superintendent of the line, Mr. Cromwell."

Cromwell grasped his hand, saying:

"I'm glad to meet men of your stamp, sir. Let me see you privately for just one minute."

"All right," said Fred, and the two stepped out about ten paces from the crowd.

"The president of the company has wired me full authority to engage you and your two friends to help the railroad detectives either kill or capture the balance of that band, which has been annoying the line so much within the last year. I know nothing about what your business is, but I do know the stuff you are made of, for I judge another for what he does rather than what he says. Now, if you can spare a few days of your time, you can name your terms."

"Well, we are not pressed for time," said Fred. "We live in New York State, but, owning a ranch in Colorado, we were out there on a little business, and decided to return East by way of San Francisco, just to see the country. I'll see my friends and find out what they think of it," and with that he called Joe and Jack and told them what the superintendent wanted.

"That's all right," said Joe. "I'll go if you will."

"So will I," said Jack.

"Then let's get our baggage off."

The superintendent at once took their checks for their heavy grips, and ordered the baggage-master to put them off right there.

Then the west-bound train pulled out, and the superintendent led them to a hotel.

He had brought six railroad detectives with him, each armed to the teeth.

They were introduced to the detectives, who seemed to be greatly surprised at their youth and mild manners.

They expected to find three fierce-looking men, who reveled in strife and bloodshed.

Of course, many questions were asked and answered.

The superintendent, satisfied that Fearnot knew the best plan to pursue under the circumstances, asked him to make any suggestions as to what he thought was best to be done.

"You want to secure some guides who are thoroughly familiar with this section of the country," Fred remarked to him, "for it would be like the blind leading the blind for a man who had never been here before to undertake to lead a party in pursuit of those fellows."

"That's right," said one of the detectives, who was a man of considerable experience.

"Of course it is," responded Fred. "They must have headquarters somewhere, for it seemed to me that there were fully a score of them, but they don't number so many now."

"No; I should say not," and they all laughed.

"I guess we can get the guides," said the superintendent. "Now, what else would you suggest?"

"A good horse for every man, for we'll undoubtedly have to go over and through sections where there are no roads. Then we want one or two days' rations."

The railroad agent at Maricopa, at the request of the superintendent, sent for three men, old citizens of the place, who had prospected all through the lower part of Arizona, particularly along the Gila River.

They responded promptly, and all three volunteered to go with the party as guides. Two of them believed that they could lead them almost direct to the headquarters of the gang.

The third one, however, was of the opinion that to escape pursuit and arrest, the robbers had scattered.

"That's very plausible," said Fred, "but at the same time, having been beaten off, they might have pursued different tactics. Had they succeeded in robbing the express car and the passengers, they undoubtedly would have scattered, but not getting anything, I hardly think that they look for pursuit."

"That strikes me as very good reasoning," remarked the superintendent, "and it is more than probable that some of them were wounded and got away, and their friends will have to take care of them."

The superintendent authorized the three volunteer guides to get up horses enough for the party, and that the railroad would pay for them so much per day as long as they were used.

He instructed them to have them ready to start before sunrise the next morning, and they at once left the hotel.

It was then about midnight, but the men knew everybody in the place, and had little difficulty in securing the horses.

Fred, Jack, Joe and the others immediately retired, after leaving instructions with the clerk of the hotel to call them up at daylight, and have breakfast ready for them.

They were up early the next morning, and the superintendent had a final consultation with Fearnot.

"Now, men," said he to his six detectives whom he brought along with him, "you are to follow Mr. Fearnot's instructions under all circumstances. I never met him before last night, but I'm satisfied he knows what is best to do, for he has shown that to everybody's satisfaction."

"All right; we'll follow him wherever he leads," said one of them.

After an early breakfast, they went out and mounted the horses, which had been brought up to the front of the hotel.

"Now, you guides lead the way down to where the hold-up took place," said Fred, "which is some twelve or fifteen miles from here."

"About fourteen," said one of the guides.

"Well, we want to get there just as soon as we can, and then see what we can do in the way of trailing. Jack, here, knows something about that."

"So do we," put in the three guides.

They rode hard, and in a couple of hours reached the scene of the hold-up, which was miles away from any station, or even residence. It was a wild region; yet, for all that, they found several men there, looking around, evidently drawn thither by mere curiosity.

The sight-seers were greatly surprised when they saw twelve men ride up with rifles, and some of them, uncertain as to their character, made a break for the woods.

"Round up those fellows," Fred ordered quickly; "but don't hurt any of them."

The detectives put spurs to their horses and got between them and the woods.

They halted and held up their hands.

"Oh, we are not robbers," said one of the detectives. "What are you running away for?"

"We didn't know but what you were," said one of them. "But what are you chasing us for?"

"To ask you a few questions," was the reply.

Fred rode up, and began making inquiries of them as to where they lived, what they were doing there, and if they knew any of the men who had held up the train.

Their answers were so entirely unsatisfactory that Fred became convinced that they were either the friends of the robbers, or else were afraid to tell anything for fear of the vengeance of the villains.

"Do either of you guides know any of these men?" he asked them.

"Yes, I know two or three of them," said one. "Not personally acquainted with them, but I know them by sight, and where they live."

"Well, are they all right?"

The guide shrugged his shoulders, and remarked:

"They are so far as I know. I've always assumed that if I don't know anything bad about a man I give him credit for being a good one."

"It's a pretty good rule," laughed Fred, "but it isn't always a safe one. If these men live in this part of the country, they certainly ought to know something about such a gang as that which was here yesterday afternoon. Yet they all pretend to know nothing at all about them. Don't know which way they went, nor whence they came."

It turned out that one of the men was an entire stranger to the others. Even the three guides couldn't locate him.

"Where do you live, my friend?" Fred asked him.

"I live at home when I'm there."

"Where is your home?"

"Up in the woods, about fifteen miles from here."

"In which direction?"

The man pointed northward.

"Got any neighbors?"

"Yes; there are a few scattered around."

"What do you do for a living?"

"I hunt, and make a little by acting as guide."

"Say," one of the guides asked, "give me the names of some of your neighbors. I've traveled all over the country up in that direction."

The man couldn't name one whom the guides knew, and it was very plain to all the others that he was making evasive replies to nearly every question propounded to him.

"How did you happen to be here this morning?" Fred asked.

"I heard that there was a train wrecked, and came down to see what sort of one it was."

"How did you hear there was a wreck? Where were you when you heard it?"

"I was up at my home. A man came by and told me about it?"

"You didn't hear that there was a hold-up, did you?"

"No; I didn't know it until I got down here. Then I heard these others talking about it."

CHAPTER IV.

HOW A VILLAIN WAS FORCED TO TELL THE TRUTH.

Fred eyed the man very closely as he questioned him, and in a little while became fully satisfied that his replies were evasive and that he knew more about the hold-up than he was willing to acknowledge.

"You say you heard that a train had been wrecked here, and you came down to see about it," he said to him. "Did you hear there was a hold-up by masked men?"

"No; I never heard anything about that."

"Well, see here, I'm satisfied you are not telling the truth."

"I am, though, all the same."

"Well, there's a way to find out. You must go with us, and show us where you live."

"Say, you've no right to interfere with me."

"I've no doubt you think so, but you don't seem to be willing to give straightforward answers to questions that are put to you, so we will arrest you as a suspicious character. Now, guides, search him and see what you can find on him."

One of the guides started toward him, but he backed away and reached for his gun, saying:

"I'll shoot the man who lays his hand on me."

"Say, you don't look like a fool," growled the guide. "If you draw that gun, you'll be shot to pieces in a flash."

"Well, you've no right to search me."

"An honest man wouldn't object," said Fred.

"Yes, he would. Any self-respecting man would object, as it is an insult."

"All right; you can satisfy your conscience on that point by saying that we were a dozen to one against you."

"I'll fight first," said the man, with a show of determination, but the three guides rushed on him and overpowered him before he could shoot.

One of them took his gun away from him, and then they proceeded to search his clothes.

They found a pipe, some tobacco and matches, and a lot of cartridges for his revolver.

They took his belt off, making a most rigid examination of his clothing from head to feet, but found nothing incriminating.

The leather case, though, in which he carried his revolver, had something stuffed in the bottom of it, which one of the guides fished out with a little stick.

It was a black silk mask!

The guide handed it up to Fred, who was still seated on his horse.

"This settles it," said Fred, as he handed it to Joe.

"Certainly it does."

"What have you to say of this?" Fred asked of the prisoner.

"Well, I have this explanation to make. I bought that revolver, belt and case from a man who was broke the other day, and this is the first time I knew such a thing was in it."

"A very plausible explanation," said Fred, "but it doesn't go. Now, we want to catch the balance of that gang. You probably know where they can be caught up with. If you will lead us to them we will let you get away, and if you don't, you must take the consequences."

"I told you the truth about it," growled the man.

"Maybe you have, but we don't believe it. We are going to apply the 'third degree' to you, and you can save yourself a great deal of trouble by giving your pals away. Guides, take him to the woods out on the right there."

The guides started off with him, followed by Fred and the detectives.

The others, whom they found on the spot when they arrived, started after them.

"Say, you fellows had better go home," said Joe.

"Yes," said one of the detectives, "but if any of you know anything about those robbers who were here yesterday you can pick up several hundred dollars as a reward for your information. If you don't know anything about them, you'd better return home and go to sleep. Now, who of you wants to earn five hundred dollars?"

Then men made no reply, but all turned and went in an opposite direction.

Out in the woods with the prisoner, Fred remarked to him:

"You have a chance now to save yourself a good deal of trouble and suffering. The truth is, we are satisfied that you belong to that gang. That mask is a proof of it."

"I don't know anything about them, sir. I am no robber and never have been one."

"Guide, take his shirt off," Fred ordered.

The man resisted, for he was a strong, brawny fellow, but they were too many for him. His shirt was drawn over his head, and he was tied to a tree.

One of the detectives cut several switches from the bushes.

"Now, my man," said Fred, "if we can't get the truth out of your mouth, we will get it out of your back. Have you any proposition to make?"

"Only this," said the prisoner, "that the man who cuts me with that switch, I'll camp on his trail till I plant him under ground, and I have friends who will see me through it, too."

"That's all right. Your threats don't amount to anything. But if you promise to lead us to where those friends of yours are, we'll give you a chance to save your life. And every time you deceive us, we'll draw your shirt again. You don't look like a fool, but you seem to be reasoning it out that we are. That mask found in your pistol case is a bit of circumstantial evidence against you that justifies us in doing what we are going to do. I'm going to give you a fair chance."

"Do you call it a fair chance, a dozen of you to one man? Give me back my gun, and I'll fight it out with every one of you, one at a time."

"It is not a question of honor at all. We are detectives in the employ of the railroad. You know the men engaged in the hold-up, and where they can be found. You may be obstinate, but it won't do you any good."

"All right. If you don't kill me, I'll kill the man who gives me just one cut with a switch."

"We've no intention of killing you, notwithstanding we are satisfied that you belong to that gang. There isn't one in our party who cares a snap for your threats."

"Now, Jack, you've had a little experience in that line. Suppose you take hold of that switch and give him a taste of it."

Jack dismounted and took the switch, while Fearnot drew out his watch and added, speaking to the prisoner:

"You have three minutes in which to make up your mind which you'll do."

And he waited one minute, amid profound silence, when he called out:

"One minute's gone."

A little later: "Another minute."

"Say," said the prisoner, "you want to do a little thinking yourself."

"I am," said Fred, "and thinking hard. Are you ready, Jack?"

"Ready," was the reply.

"Then let him have it."

Jack gave him a cut across the bare back that made the villain's frame quiver.

The villain was hugging the tree, for his hands were tied on the opposite side of it.

Jack was very deliberate about it, but he laid on the blows hard. There was not one in the party who was not fully convinced that the man was one of the masked robbers, but some of them were puzzled as to why he showed up at the scene of the wreck. They believed, though, that he came down as a spy, to see what he could find out for the gang.

When the third cut had been given him, he gasped out a torrent of horrible imprecations.

He was a strong-lunged fellow, and his yells could have been heard a half-mile away.

Jack laid on steadily, though occasionally stopping to give him a chance to say something; but all he said was in the shape of threats to kill every man in the party.

When he had got about twenty cuts, some of which drew blood, he suddenly weakened.

"Hold up, Jack," Fred called, and Jack desisted.

"I'll tell you all I know about it," said the fellow, his voice trembling and husky.

"Well, let's hear what it is. I'm satisfied you know all about it."

"Yes, I do know, and they'll kill me if I tell it; but I'd rather be shot to death than whipped to death."

"Well, you had that choice before, but you really didn't believe we would do what we said we would. I think we know how to deal with men of your stripe. Now, where can we find those fellows?"

"I don't know where they all are, but some of them are camped in the woods about fifteen miles from here."

"Who are they—Mexicans or Americans?"

"Both," was the reply.

"How many of them?"

"They numbered about forty, but some of them were wiped out yesterday, and others wounded."

"When did you leave them?"

"This morning about daylight."

"Came down to see what you could find out, eh?"

"Yes."

"How did you come, afoot or on horseback?"

"I rode down, and my horse is in the bushes about half a mile above here."

"How many were in camp when you left there?"

"About eighteen or twenty."

"All armed, are they?"

"Yes; every man has a rifle as well as revolver."

"What sort of a camp have you got there?"

"Several log huts."

"Close together, or scattered about?"

"They are scattered about in sight of each other. We run a few cattle, so as to make it look like an honest business."

"That's right; tell the plain truth, for if we catch you lying to us it will be all the worse for you. So far as their killing you is concerned, you will deserve death if you stay where they can find you. This is a big world we live in, you know, and you can go one or two thousand miles away, and start into some other sort of business. But train-robbing in Arizona is going to be the most unhealthy business any man can get into."

"Say," said one of the detectives, "you don't mean to let him go, do you?"

"Yes," said Fred. "We'll let him go if he tells us the straight truth."

"Yes, that was the promise you made him, but it was with the understanding that he did it voluntarily, but he hasn't done that. We had to force it out of him."

"Very true; but I reason this way, my friend, that as nobody on the train was killed except the engineer, the probabilities are that the law would send them up for fifteen or twenty years, and if you were to give the prisoner a choice between a term of twenty years in prison and a whipping on the bare back, such as he has received, he would probably prefer the penitentiary."

"I'm sure I would," put in one of the guides.

"So would I," added the other.

"We are not through with him yet," added Fred. "Some of you get his horse, tie him in the saddle, after putting his shirt on again, and let him lead the way."

They led the prisoner up in the direction of where his horse was hitched, and there they found the broncho tied to a limb, and a Winchester rifle leaning against a tree.

They let him get on the horse, and then tied his feet to the stirrups, so that it would be utterly impossible for him to dismount.

His hands were unbound, so he could guide the animal, and two of the detectives were instructed to kill him if he made an attempt to get away.

"I'm not going to make an attempt to get away," said the prisoner, "for you are too many for me."

"You've got a little sense left, but it is a pity you didn't exercise it at first."

"It is too late to talk about that now, but if I get out of this alive, I'll get even with you."

"All right. Don't bother about that now. Attend to the business in hand first, and that of getting even with us afterward. As I said before, we have no intention of taking your life, and if you keep your promise made to us, we will let you go, notwithstanding you refused to accept the proposition I first made you; but if you can get the others, one man can't do much train-robbing."

"All right. You can bet your last dollar that I'm going to do my best to get out of this scrape."

"I believe you, for it is quite natural that you should do so, under the circumstances. I've always been a man of my word, and you'll find that I'll keep it, in both letter and spirit. If we catch you playing us false, we will lay on the switches until all the hide on your back is peeled off. It is a serious matter, and we are not to be trifled with. I don't be-

lieve any man can be so thoroughly civilized as not to have a remnant of the savage left in him, and that's our case. We consider that we are dealing with savages; every one of your gang has placed himself outside the pale of the law. We are resorting to every measure, or stratagem, in our power to catch every member of it."

The prisoner led off in a northerly direction, with two of the detectives close behind him, with their rifles ready for instant use.

It was a pretty rough country, but still the timber wasn't so thick that a horse couldn't travel through it, provided the rider was good at dodging the limbs.

They had gone some five or six miles when they saw two men on horseback, out on their left, across a clearing.

The men gazed at them as though very much astonished, and then plunged into the woods beyond them, disappearing from sight before any one of Fearnot's party could draw a bead on them.

"Is that some of your crowd?" Fearnot asked the prisoner.

"I couldn't see them very well," was the reply, "but if they are not, they are friends, who will give notice of your presence in the woods here."

Fred knew the fellow was right, but he took it for granted that they were members of the party, and must either expect a fight or find the camp vacated.

"Boys," said Fred, "we must either expect a fight, or find the camp vacated when we reach there."

"I hope they won't run," said Joe.

"So do I," added Jack.

"I reckon they outnumber us," said one of the guides.

"Very likely; but as we are after them, we must camp on their trail till we get them. If any of you are afraid of getting into a fight with them, you'd better go back at once."

"I beg your pardon, sir," said one of the detectives, "but you are mistaken if you think we are afraid of a fight. We've been in this sort of work before."

"All right," said Fred. "I didn't mean to question your courage at all, but wanted to find out what you thought about it."

"Well, all we want is to catch up with them."

"That's all I want, too," Fred returned. "I've no idea of doing otherwise than to follow them just as far as they go. So push ahead, and let us get there as quickly as possible, for I'd rather have it out with them in daylight than at night in a strange locality."

They pushed on, and about two hours before sunset were within a mile of the camp.

Then Jack and one of the guides dismounted, and went forward on foot to get some idea of the location, so as to make the attack intelligently.

The prisoner became very uneasy, fearing that he might be picked off by his pals for bringing the pursuers on them. He reasoned that they couldn't understand that he was tied to his horse, for his hands were free and his feet were tied only to the stirrups.

CHAPTER V.

FRED FEARNOT'S THRILLING ESCAPE.

After waiting about a half-hour for Jack and the guide to return, Fred made up his mind to move forward, slowly and cautiously, so as to get near enough to make the attack before dark.

He knew how extremely dangerous it would be to build a camp-fire, by the light of which they could be picked off by the train robbers, so he was determined to force the fight if it was possible to do so.

Again he questioned the prisoner.

"The log huts are up on the ridge," said the prisoner, "and there is a little valley in front of them, where a stream about a hundred feet below the crest runs westward. That's where we get our water."

"Well, can we go up through that little valley?"

"Yes; no trouble about that. The underbrush has been pretty well cleared away. If you go through there, and then over the crest beyond the huts, you may be able to force them out into a clearing, and cut them off from their horses."

"But won't they take refuge in their huts?"

"No, I think not, for in that case they could be picked off if they should try to leave."

"Well, there isn't enough of us to make a cordon around the huts to prevent them from slipping out and making their escape."

"Well, I don't know what they'll do. They've never been attacked here, and as it is so near night, they may decide to take to the woods, as it would be safer for them."

Fred led his men down by the creek, where he met Jack and one of the guides, who reported that they had seen nearly a score of the villains, who semed to be undecided as to what to do.

"Three of the huts are upon the ridge on the right, and the men are consulting in groups, probably about a score of them, every man with his rifle, and they all seemed to be expecting us."

"Well, what do you think about it?"

"I think they are going to fight," said Joe.

"So do I," put in the guide.

"Well, in that case, don't any of you pull a trigger until you've taken good aim, and are sure of your man. Are you all good shots?"

Every one of them said that he was.

"All right, then. Don't forget your instructions. If there are a score of them, they are nearly two to one, so we must make every shot count."

"Say, Fred," Joe called, in a low tone of voice, "what's the matter with dividing our force, one party to sweep around to the other side, and get them between two fires?"

"Bad policy, Joe, to divide in the face of superior numbers."

"Yes, I know it is; but you and I never miss anything we shoot at, and we could down at least half of them in as many seconds if we get in sight of them."

"Yes, so we could, but that's the question. We don't know whether we can get in sight of them or not, for they can get behind the big tree."

"So could we."

"Well, I'll tell you what we'd better do. You take Jack and two of the men, and work your way around over to the other side of the hill; get into the rear of the huts, while I creep up through the timber by the creek. The others will remain here, and by that means, when we meet, we can get our bearing; but be sure of your aim before you pull trigger, every one of you, or else we might hurt some of our own side."

Joe and Jack, with one of the detectives and a guide, crept off over the hill, and were soon out of sight.

Fred proceeded alone up through the little valley, going fast in a crouching position, for at least three hundred yards.

He went a great deal faster than Joe and his party did, as he wanted to get to his destination ahead of them, and at the same time acquire some knowledge of the position.

He found that out on the left, on the other side of the little stream, the hill rose so abruptly that it was almost a perpendicular precipice for ninety or a hundred feet.

Suddenly he heard a voice call to him from the top of the bluff:

"Drop that gun, and hold up your hands!"

He looked around, and saw a half-dozen men peering at him from behind trees.

He immediately sprang behind a tree, to shield himself from their fire.

Just a moment later he heard the crack of a rifle right behind him from the crest of the hill, and a bullet struck the tree within a few inches of his head.

"Great Scott!" he exclaimed to himself, "I'm between two fires, so the tree is no protection for me. If I stay here, I'm a goner."

It was a desperate situation, but he was always quick to make up his mind and act.

To stop there and wait for Joe and his party to open fire in the rear of those up by the huts would be an act of mere madness, so he took the desperate risk of being hit, as he fled down the little valley in the direction of those he had left behind him, so he blazed away at the man who had fired at him, and saw him drop.

Then he wheeled and fired at those up on the bluff, and saw his victim throw up his hands and drop his gun.

The next instant a shower of bullets whistled and rattled all around him.

Then he bounded away at the top of his speed.

In some places he was shut off from their view for a moment by the bushes. There were no leaves on them, but the fact that he was running made the aim of the villains uncertain, yet they fired rapidly.

One bullet went through the stock of his rifle. Two cut holes in his hat. Another one blistered his back. Still he went bounding on at the top of his speed.

Suddenly, he fell in the centre of a little clearing, where he was exposed to view, and the robbers, thinking he was killed, ceased firing.

He lay there for another minute.

Suddenly he sprang to his feet and darted off again, reaching some protecting timber before his assailants could draw beads on him.

A few moments later he bounded into the midst of the detectives, who had been witnesses of his appalling danger.

"Are you hit?" one of them asked.

"I believe one or two of their bullets scraped me, but I'm by no means a dead man yet."

"Well, it was the first time I ever saw a man run the gauntlet and escape alive," said one of them.

"It is the first gauntlet I ever run myself, and I don't want any more of it. I didn't dream that any of them would be over on the bluff there, but there are a half dozen or more, so that a tree was no protection. I think, though, that I knocked two of them out, one on each side. I would have been all right if Joe and his party had attracted the attention of those behind me."

"There he is now!" exclaimed one of the detectives, as they heard firing over beyond the huts.

"Come ahead now, every one of you," and he darted up the hill, followed by the others.

The men over on the bluff were firing across the little valley at Joe's party, evidently thinking that all the detectives were on that side.

They exposed themselves.

Fred caught sight of them, and pointing to them, called in a low tone of voice to those with him:

"Give those fellows a volley. Let no man escape. Be sure of your aim."

"One."

"Two."

"Three," and the volley was almost as one report.

Not one of the half-dozen men on the bluff escaped. They all went down, one of them tumbling over the precipice clear to the bottom.

That created a panic among the others over by the huts, and they sought refuge inside of the one nearest Joe, and farthest from Fred's party.

"Look out, now," Fred called to them. "They've got inside of that farthest hut. Get behind trees, quick."

One of the detectives received a flesh wound before he could get behind the tree he was making for.

"Now, boys," said Fred, "aim for the crack about eighteen or twenty inches above the floor."

"Say, the floor of those huts is on the ground," said one of the guides. "They are nothing but pens with roofs on them."

"All right. Then fire a little lower, and aim so your bullets will go through the cracks. If they are lying down inside you'll get them. If standing up, you'll have a chance to break their legs."

"Say, ain't there danger of hitting Joe and his party?"

"There's just a little danger, but not much."

They kept up the fire for fully ten minutes, during which time more than a hundred shots were exchanged.

Then one of the detectives suggested to Fred that they were wasting ammunition.

"How do you know we are?"

"Because we are shooting at things we can't see."

"Very true; but we can see the house, can't we?"

"Yes; but we are not here after the house."

"Very true; but the men we are after are in there."

"Yes."

"Well, if you keep on shooting through the cracks, low down, we will soon knock them all out. I'll wager that half of them are wounded now. Those logs are not very large, and a bullet can go through them at this distance, unless they are of most extraordinarily hard wood."

"I don't believe it," said the man.

"All right; I'll prove it to you. There stands a tree out there, fully as thick as the largest one in that hut. It's true it's a little closer to us than the hut is, but I want to show you with what force a Winchester shoots," and he aimed at the tree, about seventy-five yards, and fired.

"Now go look at the tree, about four feet from the ground."

The detective went and looked at the tree, and was amazed at finding that the bullet had gone clear through it.

He came back and reported to Fearnot that he was right.

"Well, let me tell you that I've seen the Mauser rifle send a bullet clear through a tree three feet in diameter, at a distance of about a hundred yards."

"Was it a solid tree?"

"Yes; there was no hollow in it. The Mauser has been known to kill a man at a distance of a mile and a half. The Winchester is sure death at the distance of a mile, if you can hit the man. The difficulty of such long-range shooting, though, is in the marksmanship of the man who handles it. So just keep up your fire, shooting low, and unless those fellows inside climb up under the roof, we will kill every one of them, if our ammunition will hold out a half-hour longer."

It was a hard thing for the detectives to believe, but they continued firing until they heard a voice from the hut call out:

"Say, there! Let up! We've got enough."

"Then come out," answered Fred.

Only three men came out, two of them limping.

They had left their rifles inside.

"Come down here!" Fred called.

The men obeyed. They were searched and disarmed.

"How many men are left inside?" Fred asked them.

"About a dozen, I believe," said one.

"There must be more than that."

"No, that's all. Six were on that bluff over there."

"Well, why don't the others come out, then?"

"They can't. Those who are not dead are wounded. Your bullets went through the logs and fairly riddled us."

"Well, seeking refuge in there was the worst thing you could have done for yourselves, for the logs were no protection at all. You could have done better by taking to the woods and getting behind the larger trees."

The detectives bound the prisoners, while Fred sent a man around with an order to Joe and Jack to cease firing.

They then went up to the hut. It was a ghastly sight that met them. Every man in there was down. Seven were dead, and five wounded.

The wounded ones had been shot through the leg.

By this time the sun was sinking down below the hills in the west, and Fred saw that darkness would soon be upon them, so he ordered a big fire built out in front of the hut.

Another was built on the opposite side. There were many logs lying about, and they calculated that the fires would last all night.

"Now, boys," he said, "do what you can for these wounded men."

Fred was about the only one who knew anything about dressing a wound. Jack was an expert at dressing the hurts of cattle, and he did the best he could.

Fred then put out four men as sentinels, under the impression that some of the gang might return during the night.

They were about thirty-five miles from Maricopa. It was his intention to send a man back early the next morning for assistance to get the wounded men conveyed to that place.

Two of his men had received flesh wounds, which Fred dressed with a great deal of care and skill.

They were more painful than dangerous, though, but the men didn't seem to mind it, so rejoiced were they at the success of the expedition.

When Joe heard of Fred's running the gauntlet down by the creek, he took him severely to task for his recklessness.

"Why, what are you talking about, old man? I would have been riddled with bullets had I not made the run, for I was exactly between two parties, where it was impossible for me to conceal myself, and they were blazing away at me. The first shot entered a tree within a few inches of my head. I have three bullet-holes through my hat. I've got a blister on my back. One bullet went clear through the stock of my rifle. I tell you, it was the closest call I ever had in my life."

"I didn't expect to see you come out alive," remarked one of the detectives.

"I thought you were dead when you fell," said another.

"No; I fell purposely to make them stop firing, as there was a little clearing of about fifty feet length, where I knew they could all have a full view of me. They ceased firing, thinking I was finished, and their attention was attracted to Joe's party. Then I sprang up and ran again, reaching the thicket before they could aim at me. I believe that saved my life."

"I never saw anything like it," said one of the old guides. "If you don't bear a charmed life, no man ever did. At least a hundred shots were fired at you, nearly all of which were within seventy-five yards of you, some beyond a hundred."

"He has always been the luckiest fellow I ever knew," put in Joe.

"Yes, I have been lucky," Fred laughed, "but I wouldn't take such a chance as that again for a million dollars. I'm

going to hang up these clothes and this hat in a glass case when I get back home, as a curiosity."

"Well, I think you are a greater curiosity than your hat and clothes are," said one of the detectives; "for you've managed this thing better than the most experienced soldier or detective could have done."

In the meantime, the man whom they had captured down by the railroad and whipped on his bare back was brought in, taken out of the saddle, and bound hard and fast with the other prisoners.

He and one other were the only ones of the gang unhurt, barring the whipping he had received.

The prisoner alongside of him, knowing that he had gone down to the railroad as a spy, suspected that he had guided their captors up to their headquarters.

He denied it, though, but admitted that he had been captured and brought along, while the others followed the trail.

The prisoner asked two of the detectives about it, but they shrugged their shoulders and made no reply.

Along in the night, two more of the gang came in and walked right up to the camp-fire, without suspecting that anything had happened, and found themselves covered with a half-dozen rifles.

CHAPTER VI.

FRED'S TALK AT MARICOPA.

The two late arrivals were nearly paralyzed when they found themselves looking into the muzzles of a half-dozen Winchesters.

They held up their hands when ordered to do so.

Each was searched and disarmed.

"Are any more of you coming in to-night?" Fred asked them.

"I don't know," one replied. "But what's happened."

"Why, the worst thing that ever happened," said Fred. "Your entire gang is nearly wiped out, and I guess you won't hold up any more trains."

"I've never held up any trains," said the fellow.

"Well, I can't say that you have, but you'll pay the penalty for being caught in bad company."

"What company have you found me in?" the fellow asked, evidently a pretty shrewd one.

"That's all right," said Fred. "You came home to roost, and found somebody else in possession of your roost."

The detectives bound them both hard and fast, and they spent the night on the ground, alongside of the other prisoners.

As soon as it was daylight, Fred sent two of the detectives back to Maricopa.

They followed the trail they had made themselves, straight down to the railroad, where they turned and went eastward till they struck the town.

The superintendent was there waiting for them.

Their report completely electrified him.

"Fearnot is a genius!" he exclaimed, "and doesn't know what fear is."

"You are right about that, sir. The robbers caught him in a trap, and he ran nearly three hundred yards between two fires. Bullets flew around him, thick as hail, but he escaped, with only a slight scratch in the back, but his hat and clothes were riddled with bullets. There are twelve or fourteen of them dead, and we have eight prisoners. He wants help to get the wounded men in."

"Sorry he didn't lynch them, and save us that trouble."

"We wanted to, but he wouldn't permit it. He says they are prisoners, and what is done to them must be done by the law."

"Yes! Yes! That's right; but, for all that, I'm sorry he didn't string them up. It'll be a lot of trouble to get those wounded men out of the woods, where there's no roadway, but we'll send a handcar down to the place of the wreck, lift it off the track, and wait there till they are brought down."

"I don't know how we are going to bring them down."

"Neither do I, but I suppose it will have to be done. I suppose, though, they can be placed upon horseback, and made secure, but not very comfortable."

The superintendent at once gave orders for a hand-car to be sent down the road to the scene of the wreck, and there lifted off the rails, so as not to obstruct the passage of trains.

He employed a physician to go along, and fresh horses were procured for the two men who had brought in the news.

The hand-car was sent on down the road, and when it reached the spot, had to wait two hours for the horsemen to appear. They were then guided up through the woods to the scene of the battle.

When they reached there, they found that two of the wounded men had died.

It was so late in the day when they reached there that they were compelled to remain till the next morning.

During the night they sat around the camp-fire, talking over the incidents of the day before.

"I've been a railroad man for nearly twenty years," said the superintendent, "and we've had a lot of trouble with bands of lawless characters ever since the Southern Pacific road was built, but this is the most thorough cleaning-out of a gang that I ever heard of, and you can rest assured, Mr. Fearnot, you and your two friends, that the company will do the fair thing by you."

"That's all right, superintendent. We were willing to render what assistance we could. We didn't hire out as man-hunters, but we were willing to pursue and arrest those who attempted to rob us personally. They fired the first shot, and the first bullet missed my head only a couple of inches. Just look at that, will you?" and he pulled off his hat and passed it over to him for inspection.

"Was the hat on your head when these holes were made in it?"

"Yes; and I was sprinting for all I was worth."

"A pretty close call," remarked the doctor.

"I should say so," assented the superintendent.

"I think it was the closest I ever had," remarked Fred, "and I've been in some pretty tight places. I guess, though, they were not good wing shots."

During the night, the superintendent ordered the bodies to be gathered up and buried.

It was a gruesome task, but the men accomplished it, and at about midnight they rolled in the blankets of the robbers which were found in the hut.

They were up again by sunrise, and the superintendent took the responsibility of ordering each one of the huts set on fire.

They were all burned down, and then the prisoners and the wounded men were taken to the railroad. It was a slow, wearisome journey, for the wounded men had to be fixed on a litter constructed upon the backs of two of the bronchos, under the direction of a physician.

The doctor was a rough sort of a fellow, but he was very much at home at that sort of business.

He took a great fancy to Fearnot, Joe and Jack. He invited Fearnot to stop with him at his home when he reached Maricopa.

"I left my baggage at the hotel there," Fred replied to him.

"That's all right. It is easy enough to have it moved to my residence."

"Well, we will wait till we get there, doctor. I appreciate your offer very much, indeed, but I'm not sure it would be right for me to accept it, because I think we three should keep together."

"It won't be much of a separation," the doctor remarked, "as I live within three blocks of the hotel."

When they reached the railroad, the prisoners and the wounded men were placed on the handcar, and started out, going at a much more rapid pace than the men on horseback could.

Still, the riders reached there a little more than an hour later.

There was a great crowd waiting to greet Fearnot's party.

They cheered them all the way up to the hotel, and as soon as they dismounted and gave up their horses there were scores of citizens who pressed invitations upon them to drink with them.

Jack accepted, but Fred and Joe declined, stating that they never drank intoxicants at all.

The superintendent was not only a splendid railroad man, but also was a good talker.

He made a speech to the crowd, telling them that as long as those three young men were alive they could travel over the Southern Pacific Railroad, from one end to the other, free of charge.

"And besides that, the treasurer of the railroad stands ready to pay them any sum of money, within reason, that they may demand for their services."

"We've no demand to make," said Fred, interrupting him. "Those fellows held us up, and we had a grudge against them."

"That's all right," said the superintendent. "There were more than a hundred men on the train who were held up the same as you were, but they didn't pull a gun. On the contrary, they all had chills, and shook until they loosened their very toenails."

"Well, we are not built that way," said Fred, and the crowd roared with laughter.

That night the hotel was crowded with a pretty rough gang, who drank freely, but were good-natured withal.

Fred and Joe made themselves very popular by mingling with them, cracking jokes, and finally sang two or three rattling good songs.

Two fiddlers came in, with their violins under their arms.

"Hello!" said Fred. "Give us a tune," and both the musicians, after taking a drink, tuned up their instruments and began playing.

The violins were cheap ones, but the musicians seemed to be cheaper. The music was really execrable.

"Say, let me have that violin a moment," Fred asked of one of them.

The musician handed it to him. He spent about five minutes tuning it up.

Then he rosined the bow and began playing.

The silence in the room was so profound that the dropping of a buckshot on the floor could have been heard by everyone present. They never listened to such music from a violin before.

The musicians gazed at him with mouths and eyes wide open.

"Well, shoot me for a coyote!" one exclaimed. "I've had that fiddle for five years, and never dreamed that it had so much good music in it."

"Why, it's full of good music," said Fred, "but it isn't to be drawn out by main strength. You put too much weight on the bow. You want to handle it tenderly. Now, listen to this," and with the violin he proceeded to imitate the crowing of a cock, the cackling of a hen, the grunting of pigs, and finally the prolonged braying of a donkey.

The crowd fairly roared, for they'd never heard such sounds coming from a violin before.

"Now, let me tell you, friends," said Fred, who was in an unusually good humor, "there is no instrument in the world which can give forth sweeter strains than a good violin, but one must understand how to bring them out. I've known men to get five hundred dollars a night for playing a violin at concerts in large cities, on account of their great skill. It has to be touched tenderly as well as skillfully. I want to show you how it will respond to the touch of a master. Now, everyone keep still and listen," and he began drawing the bow so softly that scores of those present were seen to turn their heads as if to catch the very faint sounds.

Some of them placed their hands behind their ears. The strain started so faintly that it was difficult to catch it. Then it gradually grew louder, until the volume of sound filled the room, and could have been heard far out on the street. Then it began to grow fainter and fainter, until it died away, as if in the distance, like the subsidence of a wind.

Joe said he never saw a crowd so deeply interested in his life.

Fred then played "Home, Sweet Home" to his and Joe's singing.

The reader knows what splendidly cultivated voices they have, and the chords from the violin mingled with their voices so harmoniously that not one of the listeners could distinguish one from the other.

The words and the air of that grand old song touched the hearts of many of them, and carried them back to the days of their youth, into many far distant homes.

Several of them were seen to hastily brush tears from their eyes.

Others, who had been boisterous during the evening, became subdued and quiet.

"Friends," said Fred, when he ceased singing, "I've been twice around the world; have been in many strange lands; but I never saw a spot that was dearer to me than the home where my father, mother and sister live. That song is one that never fails to touch the tenderest spot of my nature. I can't conceive it possible that one can forget his home, and, above all, the face, the voice and the tender touches of a loving mother. He must, indeed, be a wicked, vile man who can. I don't believe that any man who dies in his senses fails to recall the memory of his home and his mother as earth fades away from him. I believe there is something good in every man, no matter how bad he may be, but strong drink and bad associations never fail to have their effect on them. A man can't be wholly lost who cherishes the memory of home and mother, and yet the man who wrote that song never had a home. He died in Tunis, on the north coast of Africa, and after many years his body was brought back to New York City, and laid in state at the city hall for twenty-four hours; but what he wrote was the longing of his heart, something that his whole nature craved. A thousand years hence, his song will be sung all around the world. Wherever there are English-speaking people, it is the favorite song to-day, for it gives expression to the longing of the soul for restful repose and pleasant memories. A man may be cursed with a bad home, where the father and mother drink, carouse, and abuse their children; yet when those children grow up, they will imbibe ideas of what a true home is, or should be, and it finds expression in singing that song. It has checked many a man in an evil career. I believe that it has done more good than any sermon ever preached by man, and if men learn the words and sing the song it will always have a good effect upon them. Somebody wrote that 'music hath charms to soothe the savage breast.' I've seen Hindoo jugglers, with a crude instrument, charm deadly serpents by playing upon it. I've seen them with half a dozen different kinds coiled upon the ground about them, with their heads raised a foot or so, and swaying back and forth, as if keeping time with the strains of the music; yet who would believe that a serpent could be swayed by music? It is something we can't comprehend; but evidently it has its effect upon some kinds, if not upon all, and it is the same way with men. Some are passionately fond of it, while others have no ear for music at all. Once upon a time an Irishman heard a mule braying. He looked at the animal and listened, and his comment on the performance was:

"'Bedad, it's fine ears he has for music, but it's a bad cowld he has.'

"Now let me tell you something about man. We all claim to be men, but it's seldom we find two who have the same nature, similar features, thoughts and desires. It is claimed that he is the highest type of the animal kingdom, because he overpowers and masters all the other animals by his ingenuity. There are scores of animals who are stronger than man, and could easily destroy him in a fight with nature's weapons, yet they all recognize him as their master. Now, in every man there is some of the nature of the lower animals. You've heard a man called a hog, because his actions showed that he had some of the attributes of that animal. You've heard other men characterized as being as stubborn as a mule. Why? Because he had some of the traits of the mule in him. You've heard others pronounced as being slippery as an eel; while still others have been called dogs, and so on down through all the animal kingdom. It's a great study, and perhaps every one of you know people with such natures. You've heard men called 'lion-hearted,' because they don't know what fear is. There was a king of England several centuries ago, who is to-day known in history as 'Richard of the Lion Heart.' Others have been called 'fierce as a tiger.' The tiger is far more fierce than the lion, and, in fact, a more dangerous animal. The beasts of the forests and jungles never change their nature, but education, self-restraint and a cultivation of a gentle nature can make a thorough complete change in man: and those are the virtues that every one of us should strive to cultivate. When we were boys, every one of us wanted to know things. But some of us were too proud to ask questions, for fear we would betray our ignorance. That is a great mistake. It's a false pride. It's a man's business to always try to learn things that he doesn't know. No man can become a learned man who doesn't ask questions, who doesn't study and investigate deeply into the arts and sciences, and they are the ones who rise above their neighbors, and are looked up to and respected. I would rather be a weak, puny man physically, and know things than to be able to thrash any other man and still be ignorant. Knowledge is power, for it enables one to invent things that supply the strength and force that nature has denied him; but then, my friends, I didn't intend to preach a sermon to you."

"Go on!"

"Go on!"

"Go on," they yelled to him.

"Talk all night if you want to."

"Thank you; I'd rather shoot at you with my mouth than with my gun. The gun will kill, but my tongue won't. If the barkeeper behind here was not listening, I might say something that he wouldn't like."

"Go ahead," said the barkeeper.

"No; this is not the place. I'm a good deal like the good-natured man who said he had nothing in the world against the bedbug, but he did object to the way he made a living."

The crowd looked at the barkeeper and roared with laughter. The drink-mixer himself joined in with them.

"That's all right," said the barkeeper. "I never yet heard any talk that would quench a man's thirst."

CHAPTER VII.

HOW FRED KEPT HIS WORD WITH THE TRAIN-ROBBER.

Fred's talk to the men at the old tavern at Maricopa was extremely interesting to them.

Superintendent Cromwell appreciated it highly, and remarked to him:

"You're a fine talker, Fearnot.

"Oh, you haven't heard him yet," laughed Joe. "He can coax the birds off the bushes."

"I believe he could," laughed the superintendent. "I'm satisfied he can knock them off all three of you."

"But look here, superintendent," said Fred. "I want a little quiet talk with you for a minute or two."

"All right. Come up to my room," and they went up to the superintendent's room, where Fred explained to him how he had promised to give the robber, whom they had captured down by the railroad, his liberty if he would lead them to where the gang had their headquarters, adding:

"Now, I want to make my word good with him."

"But they tell me he refused to accept the offer, until he was whipped on his bare back as long as he could stand it."

"Very true. But after that I promised him liberty if he would make no attempt whatever to deceive us, and I must say that he kept his word with us to the very letter; but if we take him to the country seat and turn him over to the officers of the law, I won't be able to make my word good with him.

"Well, what do you want me to do?"

"Turn him loose; let him go. He hasn't yet been surrendered to the sheriff."

"Well, the sheriff has been telegraphed for, and he'll be here this morning. I'm sorry you made him the promise. I can't see that it holds good, because he refused to accept it, and the truth had to be whipped out of him."

"That's very true; yet he could have given us a lot of trouble—probably delayed us long enough for the gang to get the news that we were on their trail. In that case, they could have all got away. I never broke my word with a man in my life. Were I to make a bargain with Old Nick himself, I'd stand to it at whatever cost. I should have turned him loose at their headquarters and let him get away during the night, but the truth is, I forgot about it."

"All right. There is no jail here, but simply a lock-up, which some of the detectives had to guard all night. We'll go down there and take him out."

He and Fred left the old hotel, went down to the little lock-up, and the man who had the key opened the door and let them take the prisoner out.

"Look here," the fellow asked of Fred, "are you going to keep your word with me?"

"Yes. That's just what I came down to do. You'd better mount your horse, and strike out for parts unknown without any delay. There are people here who want to string you up."

"Well, you should have done this last night, when I could have got away in the dark."

"Oh, it's easy enough to make them believe that you are trying to help capture the others."

They gave him his horse, and he rode out of the little town, and soon disappeared.

Fred and the superintendent gazed after him as long as they could see him.

"Where do you think he will go?" Cromwell asked.

"I have no idea, but I believe that he is just fool enough to try to get even with us. He may disguise himself and get on to Jack Lewis' trail to wipe him out. He threatened it a dozen times. There are some people, you know, who never learn anything, not even by red-hot experience. He offered to fight the whole gang of us, one by one, if we would give him his gun, showing that he is a man of a desperate nature."

"Lewis can take care of himself, can't he?"

"Yes, if he can see his enemy, but that man would murder another in his sleep."

"Where does Lewis live?"

"He has been living on my ranch in Colorado, but I hardly think he will keep his place there; in fact, he has asked permission to go to New York with me."

"Well, what can he do there?"

"I'll give him employment."

"If he wants employment on the road he can have it."

"He doesn't want it. He prefers to go back to New York with Joe and me, and as he is just the kind of a man we want, we will take him back with us."

"All right, then. But if ever he wants employment on this road, he can have it. A life pass will be sent to all three of you."

"Thank you. We'll appreciate that, but the probabilities are when we return East we may never see this section of country again. But if we should come out this way, we will use the passes, of course."

"All right," said the superintendent. "If we should be troubled with another gang of train-robbers, we'll invite you to come out."

"It's a business I don't like," returned Fred. "At the same time, I'm always willing to lend a hand to capture criminals anywhere; but they are the sort of fellows who have to be shot at, and probably a few of them killed before they can be captured."

"Yes; and you are just the sort of man to do it."

"I'd rather some one else should do it. The sheriff of the county where our ranch lies was very badly wounded once, and I was appointed to act as sheriff in his stead until he was able to serve again, and my experience was similar to what it was in this affair. We had a gang of horse and cattle-thieves to clean out. I organized a posse of about thirty-five men, and we had a regular battle with them."

"Did you clean them out?"

"Most thoroughly. Those that were not wiped out are now in State prison, and the county is to-day one of the most quiet in the State."

"That's the only way to do it," said the superintendent.

"Yes. You have to deal with such fellows with a very firm hand. Run them down, and either kill or capture them. The sheriff tried to arrest some of them, and they shot him. When we first bought our ranch there was a band of Apaches and renegade whites who were running off the cattle from the ranches all along through that section, and the ranchmen were appealing to the sheriff to protect them. We had a dozen cow-boys, and bought a Winchester for each one. In three months they had either left that part of the State or been planted."

"That's the way to do it."

"Well, let me tell you something about protecting trains. The company should have a Winchester for every employee on the train, so that they could use them when it is held up. Generally, the average citizen becomes panic-stricken when he meets a masked man with a gun in his hand, and the man in the mask is fully aware of that fact; but if they are fired on, and met with a stubborn resistance, they very promptly take to their heels, because they know that they are up against the law, and that no man can be punished for shooting at them."

"That's a good suggestion. I'll submit it to the company."

"Do so, and if it is accepted, there'll be no more holding up of trains. It'll break it up all over the country. Jesse James and his gang terrorized Missouri for several years. Sometimes just one man could hold up a crowded train, go through it and rob all the passengers, simply because nobody on board had the nerve to pull his gun and shoot. One of Jesse's own men had to be bribed to kill him."

"Yes; I remember that incident, and I always thought that it was a disgrace to the State of Missouri to have to resort to such methods; yet at the same time I believe the Governor was justified. It seemed to me that if they had offered a very large reward for him, dead or alive, it would have appealed to the cupidity of thousands of men, who would have gone gunning for him."

"Large rewards were offered, and at least a score of detectives were on his track for several years. He could disguise himself in such a way that even personal friends were unable to recognize him. He had a home, and a wife, and I'm not sure, but I think he had one or two children. He would go out and make a rich haul, and then return home, where he lived under an assumed name, and everybody regarded him as a model citizen. His identity was never discovered by any of his neighbors. I believe his widow is still living. He was a remarkable man in many respects."

"The West has been very fruitful of such characters," said Cromwell.

"Yes. But not any more so than other sections, for there are robbers and burglars by hundreds in every large city in the country, from Maine to California. Only out East they carry on their work differently from what they do here, because the population is more dense. Here a band of robbers can ride along the highway and hold up travelers. Were they to try that style out East, a thousand men would be in pursuit of them inside of twenty-four hours after they had committed a robbery. There are bad men all over the world. There are many hundreds of men and women in New York City alone who live and dress well on their wits. They swindle, and commit forgeries and burglaries. Many are caught and punished, while others go scot free. Sometimes they commit swindles under forms of law in such ingenious ways that the law is unable to punish them for it. I don't believe there are any animals in the jungles anywhere on the face of the globe who are more savage than civilized man is."

"You don't mean that, do you?"

"Yes, I do. I don't believe that a man can be so civilized and educated as to entirely eliminate the savage from him. Education only widens a bad man's field, and widens his capacity for mischief. There are men who are born bad, and environment makes them worse. Out East, they have the benefit of the public schools, where every one can acquire an education. I've met and made the acquaintance of tramps who are graduates of the great colleges, and in every instance I've found a screw loose somewhere in their mental and moral makeup, which the very best education couldn't rectify. I've seen men with but a very limited education, who were true noblemen in every sense of the word; honest, chivalric, brave and all that; and I've seen college men who were bad all the way through; they kept out of the clutches of the law solely through fear, rather than through principle. It's been a great study to me. I constantly find myself trying to penetrate the motives of men. Give a dozen men a certain task to do, and no two of them will do it alike, notwithstanding they have been taught and given a thorough knowledge of the business. I know men who have made fortunes with extremely limited education, while others, whose minds were storehouses of information, educated almost to the limit of their capacity, were dead failures from a business standpoint. Some people say it's luck. All of my friends say that I have been the luckiest man they ever knew; but I've always held to the belief that good judgment, pluck and hard work are the stepping stones to success all the time."

"You are right about that," assented the superintendent. "Hard work and strict attention to duty generally pulls a man through, and enables him to rise in his profession or occupation, and thus make his life a successful one."

"Yes; and, unfortunately, the great mass of the people look upon the accumulation of wealth as the test of merit. That no man who does not accumulate riches can be a success. I don't hold to that view at all. It's the man who contributes to the enjoyment of life by others, who sets a good example, who teaches his fellow-man how to do things right and how to live good lives, who is a far better man than he who merely accumulates his millions. I'd rather be known as a good man than a great man. I would rather have the respect and confidence of my friends and neighbors

than to have their money. I never earned a dishonest dollar in my life. I've won a lot of money in athletic games, boat races, ball games and that sort of thing, but never applied it to my own use."

"I don't know that I quite understand you."

"Well, I'll explain. The institution from which I graduated had a boat club, and in the town was a rival club that several times challenged us to a race. Either they or their friends frequently bluffed us, or tried to bluff us, by shaking wads of money in our faces, taunting us, and daring us to bet. Sometimes I yielded to the temptation, accepted their bets, and won them. Every dollar I won on those races I devoted to the education of poor boys and girls, and I never bet a dollar on a game in my life where I was not a participant in it. I never play cards. I never made a bet for the purpose of winning the money, but rather to punish the other fellow for trying to bluff me. I have three partners, and none of us smoke, chew tobacco or drink intoxicants of any kind."

"You are exceptional young men," said Cromwell.

"Oh, there are millions of others in this country who neither drink, chew nor smoke; but, unfortunately, many of them fail to recognize their opportunities, or avail themselves of them. There's an old saying that it is just as easy to do right as it is to do wrong, but I don't believe it. In nine cases out of ten it's a great deal easier to yield to temptation than to resist it, for a man's nature too often urges him to yield when his own good sense suggests that he should not do so. Common sense tells even a drunkard that he should let liquors alone, and it becomes a contest between his thirst and his will-power, and too often the thirst is the strongest. They say: 'Well, one more drink won't hurt, and then I'll quit,' but very few of them ever do so."

"That's the trouble all the time," said Cromwell. "The Southern Pacific Railroad won't keep a man twenty-four hours in its employ after they find out that he is a drinking man. No objection is made to a drink now and then, but if they learn that it is his regular habit, or that he has ever drank to excess, he quickly gets his walking papers."

"Yes; and the probabilities are he will then drink worse than ever, and thus destroy his chances of getting another situation. Jack Lewis takes a drink whenever he feels like it, but I've never known him to be under the influence of it, and he has been three years in our employ on the ranch."

While Fred was talking with the superintendent, Jack was walking about the town, while Joe was with a number of rough fellows on the piazza of the old hotel.

Several of them invited him to drink with them, but he declined, saying he was not a drinking man, and never touched the stuff.

"Say, do you call yourself a man, and can't drink?"

"I don't say I couldn't drink," said Joe. "I can drink anything that you can, but I won't. I refuse to drink anything that isn't good for me. Men, you know, have different habits. I don't smoke because I tried it once and it made me deathly sick. That was enough for me, and I let it alone."

"Well, if you had tried it again, it wouldn't have made you sick."

"Very true; but I believe I have more sense than a hog has. You give a hog something that will make him sick, and he has sense enough to let it alone after that."

"Say, do you mean to call me a hog?" the fellow asked, in a bristling manner.

"No, sir. I don't mean anything of the kind, but I said that I had as much sense as a hog."

"Well, you mean, then, that I haven't as much sense as a hog?"

"No; I meant that I had as much sense as a hog. A hog won't chew tobacco; neither will I; so I am as sensible as he is."

"And you mean by that that I haven't, eh?"

"I wasn't speaking of you at all. I was speaking of myself. But if you want to pick a row and fight about it, draw your gun."

"Great rattlers!" gasped the bully. "You want to die young," and he reached for his gun.

"Oh, no!" said Joe, reaching for his gun and getting the drop on him. "I don't want to die at all, and I'm not going to just now. It's fellows like you who die first. You don't seem to have any sense at all. I don't want to row with you. You persisted in misconstruing what I meant. If you want to fight about it, though, just step out there in the street, and I'll show you how quickly a fool can pass in his chips."

"You've got the drop on me, pard."

"Yes, so I have, which shows that I have more sense than you have. What are you going to do about it?"

"I ain't going to do nothing, pard."

"Well, why didn't you have sense enough to do nothing at first? I don't see how you've lived as long as you have, for fools like you shouldn't be permitted to live. You go around filling yourself with tanglefoot, destroying what little sense you were born with, and trying to bulldoze people by threatening to shoot, and you don't know anything about shooting, either."

CHAPTER VIII.

A LIVELY TIME IN MARICOPA.

"I reckon I do know how to shoot," said the bully.

"Oh, yes! Just like a little boy shooting fire-crackers," retorted Joe. "I've got the drop on you. I've no intention of hurting you, but I'm not going to stand any of your foolishness. So the best thing you can do is to get away from here. I've run up against such men as you all over the country. You are nothing but a bluff, a bag of wind. You'll shoot a fellow when you get the drop on him; but if you think you know how to shoot, get out there in the street, hold the muzzle of your gun toward the ground, and I'll do the same, and let somebody count three."

"I don't want to shoot you, pard."

"What did you reach for your gun for, then?"

The fellow made no reply, and some of his friends began laughing at him.

"Give up your gun to a friend," said Joe. "I'll give up mine, and if I don't wipe up the ground with you, I'll buy a full barrel of whiskey, and make you a present of it."

"Great rattlers! Do you mean that?"

"Yes. I'm only a young 'tenderfoot,' but I can show you how much you don't know in about two minutes by the watch."

He was a big, brawny fellow, and believed he could handle the youth with one hand.

He passed his gun to one of the by-standers, as did Joe also.

Then the circus began.

It was the same old story.

The bully was handy with his gun, but not with his fist. Joe pounded a tattoo on him from his face to his waist. He never landed a blow, and in less than two minutes he acknowledged that he had enough.

A big crowd gathered around, and Fred and the superintendent ran up to see what the excitement was.

"Hello!" said Cromwell to Fred. "Your friend Joe is having a fight with a man bigger than himself."

"That's all right," laughed Fred. "Let them alone."

Joe had knocked all the stuffing out of him before the fellow knew what he was up against.

"Why, the other man is taller and heavier than he is."

"That makes no difference. He doesn't know how to handle himself."

Cromwell looked on, a deeply interested spectator, and when the bully gave up, he was a very much surprised man.

"Say, Fearnot, is he a prize-fighter?"

"No; but he could win a prize every time. He and I were school-mates, and I taught him sparring myself."

"Well, I'm astonished."

"He could astonish you in many other ways," returned Fred. "He can take care of himself every time. I've seen him kill birds on the wing with a revolver. He is a dead shot."

On making inquiries as to what the trouble was, one of the by-standers explained it.

Nearly every man in the crowd wanted to shake hands with Joe, for they admired his pluck and skill.

They were rough fellows, who placed the physical above the mental man every time.

Fred, though, noticed some four or five men who looked at him with scowling faces, and talked with each other in low tones. He at once suspected that they were a gang who worked together for no good purpose.

He called the superintendent's attention to them.

"I guess they are friends of that fellow," remarked Cromwell.

"That's what I think, but isn't it strange that men will behave that way?"

Just then Jack Lewis came up and asked what the trouble was.

Fred explained it to him, and he laughed, saying:

"Sorry I didn't see it."

"Well, it was the same old thing," said Fred. "Joe didn't want to shoot him, preferring to give him a lesson and let him live."

"Yes," said one of the men who had been scowling at Joe. "I reckon he wanted to live himself."

"That's natural, isn't it?" Fred asked.

"Yes, with a coward. Only cowards fight with their fists."

"You don't mean that, do you?" Fred asked him.

"Yes; he is trained to fight that way, and he knew he could lick the other fellow, who always fights with his gun, like any other white man does."

"Why didn't he do it when he was invited to do so?"

"Because he had the drop on him."

"Had he challenged me that way, I would have accepted it."

"Yes; and you'd have been killed, too."

"Maybe so, and maybe not. Well, you don't want to challenge him. He is a 'tenderfoot,' but he knows how to shoot."

"I reckon I'm a better shot."

"You are fooling yourself," laughed Fred.

"No, I'm not. I'm a better shot than you are."

"Well, just for the fun of the thing, let's try it."

The fellow reached for his gun, thinking Fearnot had challenged him to a fight.

Quick as a flash, Fred was ahead of him, got the drop on him, and remarked:

"I don't mean that we are to shoot at each other, for we have nothing to fight about. We'll shoot at a target, and if you prove to be a better shot than I am, I'll pay you a hundred dollars, and if I beat you at it, all I will require of you is to publicly say that you don't know how to shoot."

"All right."

Those who heard it were considerably elated. The man's name was Tagert, and he was rated as a dead shot by every one who knew him, and as a very bad man also.

They went about three hundred yards from the old hotel, where a piece of round white paper was tacked to a tree as a target. It was a little larger than a silver dollar.

"What's your distance?" Fred asked him.

"Any distance you please," was the confident reply.

"All right. We'll make it seventy-five paces."

"That's pretty long for a revolver."

"Yes, so it is, but it's the test of marksmanship."

The seventy-five yards were stepped off, and Fred emptied his revolver at the target, striking it almost in the centre. Only one bullet hole was seen.

They declared that only one bullet had hit the tree, and that the others had missed it.

"Oh, no!" said Fred. "All those bullets are in one hole."

A rush was made for the tree. An axe was procured, and the bullets were cut out, six of them.

Tagert was staggered, and he refused to shoot, frankly acknowledging that he couldn't do such shooting as that.

"Now, my friend," said Fred, "you are a good deal older man than I am, but I think I can give you some good advice

(Continued on page 23.)

JUST LOOK AT THIS!

Fred Has Written a Story.

Fred Fearnot has always had the impression that he could write a good story, and has requested us several times to give him a chance to show what he could do.

We finally consented, and after several efforts he has turned out what we consider to be a FIRST CLASS story. It is entitled:

A BOY OF NERVE;

OR.

Ranching in the Wild West,

By FRED FEARNOT.

IT WILL APPEAR IN THE GREATEST OF ALL STORY PAPERS,

"HAPPY DAYS,"

in No. 371,

ISSUED TO-DAY, NOV. 8th.

We trust that the thousands of Fred's admirers, who have followed his adventures through the "WORK AND WIN," will read what Fred considers his crowning effort.

Ask Your Newsdealer for a Copy of "HAPPY DAYS," No. 371.

(Continued from page 21.)

and that is: Don't be in such a hurry to pick a quarrel with strangers, or you may get under ground a long time before you want to. I make it a rule never to fight unless forced to, and I never forced a fight on a man in my life."

"How did you learn to do such shooting as that?" another asked.

"Simply by practice. A man can learn to do anything if he trains properly for it. There's scarcely any limit to human endurance. You want to let whiskey alone, though, if you want to have steady nerves. A bullet will go anywhere it is sent, and if you aim true, and hold your weapon steady, you can send it just where you please. It's an easy matter for one to develop his muscles so as to make them hard and strong, and enable a man to take care of himself against men twice his strength."

Tagert walked away, and left the crowd fully convinced that they were both tenderfeet with whom it was dangerous to trifle.

"Say, that's the first time I ever knew Tagert to be bluffed," one remarked. "He has been claiming to be the best shot in Arizona. He killed three men out in the mines."

"I heard that he killed four," put in another.

"Yes, and he is running on the reputation he has made as a bad man," added Fred, "and it's a mighty poor reputation for a man to have."

They returned to the hotel, and there found that Tagert was in the bar-room, filling up with whiskey and becoming very boisterous.

In a little while he was howling drunk, and actually cleaned out the place by drawing his revolver and firing promiscuously.

The barkeeper himself ran out and fled across the street.

Fred counted the number of shots, and knew when the bully's revolver was empty.

He ran in, and caught him in the act of putting in fresh cartridges.

He knocked him down, took his revolver away from him, and threw it over the bar. Then he led him outside the hotel, administered about a dozen kicks, and ordered him to run.

To the astonishment of the crowd, he did run two blocks down the street, where he entered another saloon.

The crowd followed him, just to see what the conquered bully would have to say about it.

The kicking had practically sobered the bully, but it failed to put any sense into him. He borrowed another revolver, and in ten minutes started back to the hotel, threatening to kill the tenderfoot.

They all ran inside to get out of the way of the bullets, Cromwell himself going with them.

Fred, though, walked out into the street, and the bully began blazing away at him. He fired one shot, which broke the man's right arm, after which he coolly walked in, joined Cromwell, and said:

"I guess he won't do any more shooting."

"Did you kill him?" Cromwell asked.

"No; but I broke his right arm, and it will have to be amputated, so he won't do any more bullying. When a bullet cuts a bone in two above the elbow, amputation invariably follows. Why the people of any town will submit to the domination of a man like him is a thing I can't understand. It is easy enough to get rid of all such."

Tagert returned to the other hotel, where the physician who went with the superintendent down after the train robbers examined his wound and told him that he would lose his arm.

"Gimme another gun and I'll kill him," Tagert roared.

"Say, Tagert, don't be a fool. That man can kill you just as easily as you could crack a flea."

"Well, he'll either kill me or I'll kill him," and he appealed to his friends around him to lend him a gun.

One of them turned his gun over to him, and he started to the upper hotel again, carrying it in his left hand.

"Say, Fred," said Joe, "he is coming back again, with a gun in the other hand. You'd better finish him."

"Well, he ought to be finished, but I don't want to do it. I won't go out to meet him, but if he comes in here, he'll lose his other arm."

"Why not go up to your room?" suggested Cromwell.

"No; I don't run from anybody."

Somebody shut and bolted the doors of the hotel to keep him out, but he went to the window and began firing at the crowd inside, apparently not caring whom he hit. He wounded a man, who drew his revolver and shot him in the breast. He sank down in his tracks.

"I guess he is finished now," remarked Joe.

"The man must be crazy," said Fred.

"Not a bit of it," said the landlord. "He is one of those fellows who would rather die than to acknowledge that he had been licked."

Again the doctor examined his wound, shook his head, and remarked:

"I don't think you can get over this, Tagert."

The fellow said nothing.

Some of his friends took him up, carried him down to the other place, and there he died in two or three hours.

In the meantime, a man came up to Superintendent Cromwell, slyly slipped a little piece of paper in his hand, and then disappeared in the crowd.

Cromwell examined the paper, and found written on it in pencil:

"There are seven members of the train-robbers gang in town."

That was all.

A minute or two later he asked Fred, Joe and Jack to go up to his room with him.

They did so.

There he showed them the paper.

"Who gave you this?" Fred asked.

"A man slipped it into my hand down in the crowd just a few minutes ago."

"Do you know the man?"

"Not personally, but I think I could recognize him again. It's evident that he doesn't want to be known as having

given this information. What do you think we ought to do?"

"Get those six detectives and three guides together again, if you can. Tell them the situation, and then we'll see if we can't round them up. I'd wager that I could point out those train robbers."

"I'm quite sure that I can," put in Cromwell. "They are the very fellows you called my attention to an hour ago."

"They are the chaps," assented Fred.

Three of the detectives were already in the hotel.

Cromwell saw them, and sent one in quest of the others.

They were found down at the railroad station.

They came up, and on the way met two of the old guides.

They, too, were invited to go with them.

Cromwell showed the writing on the bit of paper he had received, and suggested that they all stay together and await developments.

They did so, all remaining at the hotel, but saw nothing more of the suspected parties.

Night came on a little later, and quite a crowd remained in the bar-room, drinking and talking over the occurrences of the day.

Fred and his party were at the supper table when the news came in that seven men had broken into the lock-up and released the two train robbers who were held there, and rode off with them, having brought two horses along for that purpose.

"Let's go down and see about that, boys," said Fred, and they hastened down to the place, where they found the man who had the keys, recovering from a blow on the head with a revolver. He said that seven men rode up on horseback, leading two other horses. One of them knocked him down without saying a word, and when he came to, the two prisoners were gone.

The prisoners were the only ones of the captured robbers who had not been wounded.

"Mr. Cromwell, that information you got was correct," said Fred to the superintendent.

"Yes; and I believed it at the time. The mistake we made was in not hunting up those fellows we suspected and arresting them."

"Yes, that would have been the best way, but we couldn't have held them legally, for we had no positive proof against them. They've got away now in the dark, and their trail can't be followed except by daylight."

"Well, what's the matter with following it to-morrow? There are nine of them, which makes a considerable gang."

"We'll talk about that when we go back to the hotel."

Quite a crowd had gathered around the place, for it created quite a sensation.

Fred and the others, though, returned to the hotel, finished their supper, and then held a consultation up in Cromwell's room.

There were the three guides, the six detectives, Fred, Jack, Joe, and the superintendent, making thirteen in all.

The superintendent could count on the detectives because they were employed by the road. The three guides would work for him as long as he paid them, but he was not certain about Fearnot and his two friends going with them in pursuit of the rascals.

"Now, Mr. Fearnot, everything depends on you," he said to Fred. "We thought we had broken up the gang, but it seems there are enough of them left to hold up more trains."

CHAPTER IX.

FRED FEARNOT'S SCHEME TO CAPTURE THE GANG.

The superintendent's appeal to Fearnot was a very earnest one.

It looked as though he thought that without him, Joe and Jack, pursuit of the robber gang would be futile.

So far as he was concerned himself, Fred believed it was the duty of every citizen to render all the assistance in his power to catch and punish criminals.

These men were not only criminals, but enemies of the public in general; but he was so far away from his home and his usual sphere of action that he hesitated to consent to give any more of his time to the task of catching the remnant of the train robbers.

"What do you think about it, Joe?" he finally asked, turning to Jencks.

"I'll go if you will," was the reply.

"What do you say about it, Jack?"

"I'll go wherever you do."

"Now it's up to you, Mr. Fearnot," said Cromwell. "The road is already under immense obligations to you and your friends, and they are not only able but willing to discharge it to the fullest extent. We thought the task was finished, but it isn't."

"No; that's very plain, for we now know that there are at least nine of them left who are still hanging together, doubtless for more mischief; yet it may be that it is merely for self-protection."

"It is for more robbery," returned the superintendent. "That is their sole business. They have robbed miners of their gold dust. They rob stages and hold up trains. There was nearly two hundred thousand dollars' worth of gold in the express car of that train. They have agents at different points, who telegraph them information, and they laid their plans to hold up the train in the way they did. They derailed the freight in order to stop the express train without creating suspicion. They are pretty badly broken up now, but we want to finish them."

"All right," said Fred. "I'll go with you."

"I can't go myself," said the superintendent. "There is a vast responsibility resting upon me, and it is absolutely necessary for me to remain where I can keep in constant communication with other officials of the road, but you've got the same crowd that you had with you the other day. Those two who received flesh wounds say they are still able to do duty, and they'll go with you."

"All right; have the horses ready for us at daylight, two

or three days' rations cooked up, and we'll see what we can do."

Cromwell grasped his hand and shook it warmly, while thanking him in the name of the entire management of the road.

Then he suggested to the three guides to have the horses in readiness for an early start, while he would look after securing rations for the entire party.

"Now, boys," said Fred, "we've got to be off early, so we'd better retire at once and get all the sleep we can."

With that, the meeting broke up, and each retired to his own quartrs.

They were called up early the next morning, while the stars were still shining.

Breakfast was ready for them. By the time they had finished it, gray streaks of dawn appeared in the East.

"We don't want to start until it is light enough to see the trail," remarked one of the old guides.

"All right. You are the best judge of that. We'll wait until you are ready."

After waiting about a half-hour longer, the entire party mounted and rode out of the little town, going northward.

There was a road leading out toward Gila River.

"They'll follow this road for some distance, I reckon," remarked the old guide, "but we've got to look out that we don't lose the trail," and with that he put one of his guides on the right, and the other on the left, while he kept in the centre himself, to see that they didn't pass the point where the fugitives left the highway.

"You are familiar with all this region, are you?" Fred asked the old man.

"Yes; I've been all over it many a time. I think I know where they'll leave the road."

"Well, could they leave it at night?"

"That's hard to say. They may have stopped at the river till daylight."

They rode at a pretty rapid pace. The trail was broad and plain, and there was little or no difficulty in following it.

By and by they struck the river, and it looked as though the trail led right into the water.

Fred saw that it was a ford, for on the other bank the roadway could plainly be seen up the hill.

One of the guides rode across, the water reaching up to the stirrups.

When he reached the other side he stopped and sang out: "They didn't land here."

"Are you sure of it?" the old man called back.

"Yes: there's no trail here."

"Then come back," and the guide returned.

One was sent down the river to inspect the banks closely, while the old man himself went on up the stream.

The latter went about seventy-five yards when he struck the trail of several horses where they had left the river water.

He signalled to the others, and they joined him.

The trail led off eastward through the woods.

The old man dismounted and followed it on foot, leading his horse.

The others followed, one behind the other, and scarcely a word was spoken for a couple of hours.

Suddenly the old guide stopped, for right in front of him were the smouldering embers of a recent camp-fire. He examined the spot very closely for several minutes, the others keeping out of the way, for fear of getting the trail mixed.

Suddenly he pointed eastward, and remarked:

"It looks as though they were going back to their old headquarters."

"Is that the direction?" Fred asked.

"Yes."

"How far away from it are we, do you think?"

"About eight or ten miles, I should judge."

"Surely you don't think they are fools enough to go back there, do you?" Joe asked.

"Yes; for the simple reason that they would hardly think that anybody would believe that they would go there."

"That's good reasoning, too," said Fred, "and if they have done so, their leader is a pretty shrewd fellow. I guess they have sent word to other members of the gang to meet them there."

"Very likely."

"Then they will move off somewhere else. Probably go farther north and strike some of the diggings."

The old guide kept well on the trail, although in some places it seemed almost illegible. Then at other times it was very plain.

They pushed on steadily, but rather slowly, on account of the rough surface of the country.

"They are not more than three or four hours ahead of us," said the guide. "They camped where we saw that fire, and started out again as soon as it was light enough."

"I believe this is about the roughest traveling I ever did," remarked Joe.

"I'm sure it is the roughest I ever struck," assented Jack, "but if they can stand it, we can."

"I've struck worse than this," put in one of the detectives. "When you go through the cactus country you'll find it a great deal worse, and you are always in danger of being stabbed by a cactus thorn. They grow twenty feet high or more, and the thorns are long enough to go clear through a man, and as sharp as needles."

Finally the country became so rough that they could'nt make over a mile an hour. It looked as though night would overtake them before they could reach the spot they were in search of.

Finally, one of the guides called attention to a column of smoke a mile or two ahead of them.

Fred consulted the old guide, and they both came to the conclusion that the robbers had stopped and were making preparations to encamp for the night.

"I think that's their old headquarters, too," said the guide.

"Very well, then. What's the matter with our getting up close enough to watch them without being seen ourselves, and when it gets dark, creep up and capture them without having to fire on them?"

"We can get up close enough to them to do that, but if we undertake to surround them we'll have to divide our force. They'll make a rush in some direction, and we'll lose some of our men."

"Oh, I wouldn't try to surround them," said Fred. "We can dismount and leave our horses well in the rear, keep together, creep up on them, and then make a rush, covering them with our rifles. When they see us with the drop on them, they'll probably give up; but if they don't, we can destroy nearly all of them with one volley."

They kept pushing on until they got within a quarter of a mile of the place, where one of the guides recognized the spot, and declared that it was their old headquarters.

He pointed to the bluff below which Fearnot had run the gauntlet and made such a marvelous escape.

"Now, we want to get around on the north side of them," Fred said, in a low voice. "We'd better hitch our horses right here and get into the woods, about a hundred and fifty yards above where the upper tent stood."

"We can do that easily enough," said one of the guides, "for the timber on that side is pretty heavy."

"All right. Then we want to wait till the stars come out, when we can get pretty close to them. But one of you had better creep around that way and spy about until you get all the points. Then come back and report."

One of the guides volunteered to go, and he started off and was gone for an hour.

By that time the sun had gone down, and the evening star began twinkling.

He finally returned, and reported.

"I counted seventeen men," he said. "They are cooking a supper."

"Then others have joined them."

"Yes; it's their rendezvous, I guess."

"Well, they outnumber us again, so you must be very cautious."

"How were they armed?" another asked.

"I never saw any weapons but their revolvers."

"How close did you get to them?"

"About a hundred and fifty yards. But now that it is dark, you can get up within fifty yards of them."

"That's close enough," said Fred, and they started off, following the guide, treading on each other's heels almost to avoid any straying, and soon they were in sight of the camp-fire.

"Say, boys," said Fred, "I think we can play a trick on them, and capture the whole crowd, without having to kill any of them."

"How can you do that?" one of the detectives asked, each speaking in a low tone of voice.

"Why, I can imitate a woman's voice so as to deceive them, and one or two will probably come out to see who she is, and take her to the camp."

"Say, pard, I guess that won't work. It would give them notice that strangers are about, and they'll be on their guard."

"I don't agree with you," said Fred. "I'll wager we could gobble up more than half of them before the other half would become alarmed. Then it would be an easy matter to rush in and capture the others."

"Say, Fred, the only trouble about that is that if we capture them alive, we would have no proof to convict them of train robbery in any court."

"That's for the railroad authorities to look out for."

"Well, but we'd have to appear against them as witnesses, and that might keep us here for months, or compel us to come back."

"Not at all. Here are nine witnesses besides ourselves. I believe we can capture the last one of them without firing a shot."

"Well, do that," said one of the detectives, "and we'll see to it that they don't do any more train-robbing."

"But how can we capture them?"

"Easy enough. When they come up to where they hear the girl's voice, crack them over the head with your rifle barrel and tie them up before they can recover. Then it will be easy enough to make them keep their mouths shut. We can see them coming from the camp fire, while they can't see us. If it doesn't work, we've got our rifles to fall back on. But don't be in too great a hurry to shoot. So come ahead, now, and let's get up within, say, seventy-five yards of them."

They pushed on through the timber till they were within view of the camp-fire, where men were seated around, eating their supper.

Then Fred let out a merry peal of laughter, imitating the clear, silvery tones of a girl.

It was repeated several times, and then he began singing.

More than half the robbers were seen to rise to their feet and listen.

No man on earth could have made any mistake about the voice being a girl's, and in a few minutes three of the men started forward, in the direction of the voice, to investigate.

They entered the thicket, and when within a few paces of where Fred was singing, each of them received a whack on his head from a rifle barrel, which stretched him on the ground.

Their hands and feet were tied, and they were disarmed before they recovered from the stunning blows.

The singing ceased, as though the girl was talking with the newcomers. Then again was heard her merry laugh.

She was heard to call out:

"Oh, don't now! Let me alone."

A little later she began singing again, and two others left the camp-fire to join those who had preceded them.

They, too, were downed, making five of them captives.

The other three began recovering from the effect of their blows, and were told in low, hoarse tones that to utter any sound meant instant death.

Of course they kept silent.

"Say, why don't you bring that gal in?" some one called out from the camp-fire.

"I will come if you'll make this man let me alone," sang out the girl's voice. "I'm lost and don't know where I am."

Then three more of the campers left the fire, and while

girl was singing they found muzzles of revolvers pressed to their faces, and hoarse sounds:

"Keep silent, or you are a dead man!" was hissed at them.

They were bound and disarmed.

That made eight captured without firing a shot.

"Why don't you bring her in?" came from the camp.

"Please come and help me," answered the girlish voice, and four more left the camp-fire.

They were knocked down, but one of them drew his revolver and fired as soon as he fell.

The girl screamed, crying out:

"Oh, don't shoot me!"

The five still remaining at the fire sprang to their feet and ran in the direction of the thicket, evidently greatly alarmed.

The one who had fired the shot was smashed on the head by one of the detectives, and, of course, he remained silent after that.

The five men at the camp-fire seemed to be greatly perplexed.

They neither retreated nor advanced.

They knew, though, that twelve of their companions had gone out there, and that they were able to look after the strange girl without any assistance from them.

"Now, boys," whispered Fred, "we can get up within ten or fifteen paces of them before they can recognize us. By that time they can see the rifles that cover them, too. So come ahead. Two of you, though, stay behind to kill any of those fellows who give the alarm."

He led off, and the others followed, he all the time protesting like a young girl who was being taken forward against her protest.

CHAPTER X.

CONCLUSION.

When within about fifty feet of the camp-fire, they pushed forward, with their rifles leveled at the five men, and Fearnot sung out:

"Hands up!"

The five were almost paralyzed with astonishment.

Six rifles covered them, scarcely thirty feet distant from them.

Each man held up both hands as the only alternative, and the next moment found themselves prisoners.

They were quickly bound.

Three of them proved to be men whom they saw in the crowd on the streets at Maricopa.

"Now, boys, bring in those others as quick as you can," Fred ordered, and they went back after them and brought them in on their shoulders, for their hands and feet were tied.

They were deposited in a row in the light of the camp-fire.

Some of them were pretty badly hurt from the cracks they had received on their heads.

Three of them had not yet returned to consciousness.

"What are you fellows doing here?" Fred asked of one who was not hurt.

"We were doing nothing. We were going northward and were camped here for the night."

"This is one of your old camping-grounds, isn't it?" Fred asked.

"No; never was here before, but a good many stop here because it is close to the water."

"Say, where's that gal?" another one asked.

"Oh, there wasn't any girl out there! That was a hoo-doo you heard."

"Hoo-doo nothing! There was a gal out there."

"Well, if there was I didn't know it. I guess it was me you heard singing."

"I heard a gal singing," the fellow persisted.

Fred looked at him, and began singing one of the songs that he had sang out in the woods. He looked at him and listened in dumbfounded amazement. The imitation was simply perfect.

In the meantime, Jack Lewis and one of the guides were helping themselves to the robbers' supply of provisions, and soon the entire party were feasting on it.

While they were doing so, the captives were asking all sorts of questions as to why they were interfered with.

"Well, I'll tell you," said Fred. "Certain of you broke into the Maricopa lock-up last night and took out two of the prisoners confined there. There they lie, over there, the same fellows who were engaged in holding up the train the other day," and he pointed to the two men as he spoke, "and you who are asking so many questions were one of the men who rescued them."

The man denied it.

"What's the use of denying it?" Fred asked. "You left Maricopa that night, and we followed the trail of the rescuers and find you among them."

"I didn't come with them at all," said the fellow.

"That's all right. We all know better than that. You sent word to other members of your gang to meet here to-night, and when you got here some seven or eight more were waiting for you. I don't know whether we've got all the gang or not, but we've got you fellows fast, and that, too, without firing a shot. We could have shot you from the timber there, as you sat in the light of this fire, but we didn't want to do that. I hardly think, though, that you'll be able to get away again."

"I'll stake my life on that," said one of the detectives. "We've got our instructions what to do with 'em, and we are going to see that they don't get away again."

Fred and Joe wondered what the man meant, but asked no questions at the time.

He did ask a good many questions of the prisoners, every one of whom gave evasive replies.

He then examined the wounds of the two unconscious men.

Their skulls were fractured, and there was no possible hope for them.

"Some of you fellows struck a little too hard," he remarked, looking around at the detectives.

"Oh, we gave them just the same weight as we did the others, but I reckon their skulls are a little thinner."

"Can you do anything for them, Fred?" Joe asked.

"No; not a thing. I don't think they will recover consciousness at all. They may die before morning."

"That's murder," said one of the other prisoners."

"Don't you say anything," said Joe.

"You can't stop me from talking," said the prisoner.

"Yes, I can. Just keep your mouth shut, now, and don't you speak another word to-night," and with that he drew his revolver and looked threateningly at him.

The fellow shut up.

The other wounded men were given water to drink, brought by one of the guides from the creek.

The guards were put out, and the rest lay down on the leaves to sleep.

It was rather a cold, frosty night, but the fire had been built up against some logs and burned all night long.

The next morning, they were up early, as Fred wanted to return to Maricopa as early as possible.

"Now, Mr. Fearnot," said the old guide, "one of us will go back with you, taking another and less difficult route. The rest will stay here till help comes."

"What do you want any help for?"

"Some of these wounded men can't make the trip," was the reply: "so you and your two friends had better return with a guide to show you the way. If we start even now with these prisoners, it will take all day to get there, while you can reach there by noon."

"That's so, Fred. Let's get away as soon as we can."

"All right," and they proceeded to eat their breakfast, after which the four made for their horses and started out, making for the railroad, south of them, instead of by the way they had come.

They hadn't gone but a few miles when Joe leaned over and whispered to Fred:

"I'll wager you a hat that the two guides and the detectives hang those fellows."

"That's just what they are up to, Joe, but don't mention it. I tumbled to that before we left, and I'm glad we got away in time to escape any responsibility for it. I've no doubt Cromwell instructed them to do that."

"Well, you don't blame him, do you?"

"No, but it's a business I don't like. They probably deserve it, every one of them."

"Of course they do! I've no sympathy for them. I guess the band is about broken up now."

"Yes, that's the end of it. Only one left, and that's the fellow we let go."

They reached Maricopa about noon, and reported to Cromwell how they had captured, not only the nine men who left there the night before, but eight others besides.

"The old guide said he would pilot them back here, but as several of the men were wounded, we came on ahead. They'll probably reach here by night."

"All right," and there was a grim smile on the superintendent's face. "We are indebted to you and your friends to any amount you may name."

"We don't charge anything for our services. But we don't want any more of that sort of business."

"No; I must confess that it's very unpleasant."

"It is not only unpleasant, but very dangerous."

"Well, let me tell you that you were indispensable. We couldn't have succeeded in wiping out that gang without your assistance. If you'll wait here twenty-four hours, my private car will be here, and I will place it at your service to take you clear through to San Francisco. The company will pay its expenses clear through to Chicago, if you will accept the offer."

"Oh, we wouldn't put you to that trouble. We are not going to Chicago from there. We leave the Union Pacific a little way beyond Cheyenne, and go down into Colorado, to our ranch, before we go East."

"All right. You can have it through to San Francisco, then."

"Just as you please," assented Fred.

That evening the detectives came in.

"Say," Jack asked one of them, "what became of those prisoners?"

"We didn't want to be bothered with them. We left them there."

"That's all right. You fellows didn't fool us any. We came away because we didn't wish to witness it."

The detective smiled grimly, and said:

"I guess it is about time for us to have a drink," and they went into the bar-room of the hotel together, where the detective took a big drink and Jack a small one.

The old guide made a report to the superintendent, which he alone heard

Cromwell paid him a liberal sum of money, as he did the other two.

The detectives, however, were in the regular employ of the line, but for all that each of them received fifty dollars for his personal use.

He offered to pay Jack Lewis any sum he might name, but the cowboy declined to receive a penny.

He was determined to act as Fred and Joe did, and was fast acquiring their best traits of character.

THE END.

Read "FRED FEARNOT LOST: OR, MISSING FOR THIRTY DAYS," which will be the next number (154) of "Work and Win."

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FROM FRED FEARNOT'S FRIENDS!

[illegible]ville, Ind., Sept. 30, 1901.

[illegible] Tousey—

[illegible] I want to say for your week- [illegible] Win," that it is the most [illegible] of its kind that I have ever [illegible] characters are natural, and [illegible] very entertaining. I am sorry [illegible] so closely confined to New [illegible]. I should like to see him get [illegible] world again. Wm. Vant Pesen.

[illegible] high opinion of "Work and [illegible] You will hear of Fred in other [illegible] time to time

---

Alton, Ill., Oct. 6, 1901.

[illegible] Tousey—

[illegible] I read "Work and Win" and [illegible] Luck" and think they are as [illegible] better books, than can be [illegible] for the money. I like Fred Fear- [illegible] use I have the same name. Fred [illegible] there and so is Terry. Enclosed [illegible] cents, for which send me hand- [illegible]. "How to Become a Ventriloquist," [illegible] oblige, yours respectfully, Fred Hess, [illegible] Stanton St.

[illegible]ks for flattering opinion. We [illegible] that you will always enjoy reading [illegible] and Win." Fred and Terry are [illegible] complimented and send best re- [illegible]

[illegible]Scotland, N. C., Oct. 7, 1901.

[illegible]. Frank Tousey—

[illegible] Sir—Enclosed find ten cents for [illegible] please send me "How to Become an [illegible]." I have a great fancy for the [illegible] and I am trying to get a position [illegible]. I will study the book with care, as [illegible] a good bit of information from [illegible] and Win" and "Secret Service," [illegible] a constant reader of both. I [illegible] do all boys a lot of good. Hop- [illegible] hear from you soon, I remain, [illegible] Clarence S. Lewis.

[illegible]nks for most complimentary letter. [illegible] that you will continue to receive [illegible] from "Work and Win," and that [illegible] succeed in your undertaking.

Madison, Ind., Oct. 7, 1901.

[illegible]. Frank Tousey—

[illegible] Sir—Enclosed please find six [illegible] stamps, for which send me one [illegible] Evelyn medal. I have read [illegible] the issues of "Work and Win" [illegible] many other weekly papers, [illegible] and Win" beats them all. It [illegible] and most interesting paper [illegible]. Give my best regards to [illegible] Terry, and their chums. Yours [illegible] Phillips.

[illegible] for the compliment, which we [illegible]. Fred, Terry and the rest [illegible]. We trust that you are [illegible] the medal.

New York, Sept. 29, 1901.

[illegible] Tousey—

[illegible] to "Work and Win," [illegible] to Mickey Flynn. [illegible] to Fred and Terry, [illegible] and all. [illegible] and Win" the best of all [illegible] An Admirer.

Thanks for verses in praise of "Work and Win." We hope to hear from you again.

Ralston, Pa., Sept. 31, 1901.

Mr. Frank Tousey—

Dear Sir—We are steady readers of "Work and Win" and enjoy reading Fred's books very much. Find enclosed twelve cents in stamps for two Fred and Evelyn badges or medal. Yours truly, Donald Brown, Edward Priestley.

We trust that you will continue to be steady readers of "Work and Win," and that you are pleased with the medals.

Saco, Me., Sept. 30, 1901.

Mr. Frank Tousey—

Dear Sir—I have not seen any letters of praise from this place, and I think it is my duty to write you a letter. I have read all of "Work and Win" up to date, and think they are grand. Fred and Terry have built up a town or city with a great success. I should like to see and read of Fred and Terry in another base-ball game, for they are fine players. I should like to hear how Amalie's father got out of the scrape he got into. Evelyn and Mary are both good girls, good enough for any boy, and so is Marguerite. My best regards to Fred and Terry, Dick and Joe, Sam, Evelyn, Mary and Marguerite, and best regards to Mr. Hal Standish and Mr. Tousey. May you have a long and happy life. Yours truly, Edwin Huff.

We are greatly obliged for your long and pleasant letter. The author, the publisher and Fred and his friends send regards.

Hasbrouck Hts., N. J., Sept. 28, 1901.

Mr. Frank Tousey—

Dear Sir—Not being busy at the present time, I thought I would drop you a few lines and let you know that "Work and Win" is the best library I have ever read. I have read from No. 1 to 130, and as you know I am sending constantly for them. Now, I want to ask you if the Fearnot medals are in existence yet. If so, enclosed find six cents, for which send me one, and if not send me book No. 21. Congratulations to Fred and Evelyn. Yours truly, Earle Taggart.

Thanks for flattering opinion. We trust that you like the medal. Fred and Evelyn send kindest regards.

Nine Times, S. C., Sept. 27, 1901.

Mr. Frank Tousey—

Dear Sir—I don't believe you have ever had a letter from this town, so I write to tell you that I think "Work and Win" is very fine. Regards to Fred and the rest. Yours truly, John M. Ford.

For a first letter yours is very flattering and we hope to receive others as good.

Pigeon Cove, Mass., Sept. 27, 1901.

Mr. Frank Tousey—

Dear Sir—I read with great esteem and admiration the "Work and Win" weekly. It is one of the finest out. Enclosed find three two-cent stamps, for which send me a Fred Fearnot medal. With kind regards, M. A. Campbell.

"The finest out" is sincere praise. Thanks. We trust that you like the medal.

New York, Sept. 26, 1901.

Mr. Frank Tousey—

Dear Sir—Enclosed please find three two-cent stamps, for which please send to my address one medal, and oblige a constant reader of "Work and Win." E. F. Pickens, 149 Fifth Ave.

We trust that you are pleased with the medal, and that you will always want to read "Work and Win."

Nyack, N. Y., Sept. 26, 1901.

Mr. Frank Tousey—

Dear Sir—Enclosed you will find three two-cent stamps, for which send me one Fred Fearnot medal. I have been reading "Work and Win" for some time, and think there is no better book out. I hope Fred and Terry are well, and having a good time in New Era. Send my love to all. Yours truly, W. J. Truex, 18 Bridge St.

"There is no better book out" is high praise. We trust that you will always think the same and that you are pleased with the medal. Fred and Terry send best regards.

Winter Park, Fla., Sept. 26, 1901.

Mr. Frank Tousey—

Dear Sir—If there is anything that can drive away a fit of the blues it is "Work and Win." No one can be down-hearted after reading of Fred Fearnot and his friends. Success to "Work and Win." Yours truly, Frank D. Price.

Yes, there is no better cure for the blues. Thanks for kind wishes.

Pittsburg, Pa., Sept. 25, 1901.

Mr. Frank Tousey—

Dear Sir—I would like to know if you have any more Fred Fearnot or "Work and Win" badges. I would have sent sooner, but I was not allowed to read these books. I bought one and asked my father to read it. He said it was fine. My mother looked at it, too, and now I pay for it one week and my father the next. Yours truly, E. D. Griffith, 605 Grant st.

It is always best to ask a father's advice, but there is nothing in "Work and Win" to which any parent can object. Yes, we have a number of the medals left.

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